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[IT WAS THE PORTRAIT OF HER HUSBAND WHOM SHE HAD FORSAKEN—JOHN DREW.]

## A FEARFUL SECRET.

### CHAPTER VI.

JANETA LEIGH had many faults, but there was the making of a good, true woman in her, despite her ambition and the wild impulses of her undisciplined heart. Love would have softened and developed her, but unfortunately her longing for riches, her yearning desire to escape from the trials of poverty, had hurried her into a terrible mistake which must make love henceforward an unknown word to her.

Had she been a better woman or a worse, Nettie would have stayed with Mr. Drew, and made the best of her mistake.

A tender, self-sacrificing, Griselda type of girl would have clung to her husband in spite of all, and done her utmost to make the best of his evil fortunes and smooth his troubles. A mercenary, heartless woman would have argued she was his wife, and he was bound to support her somehow. At the very worst she was safe from working for her bread.

But Janeta Leigh—the old name must cling

to her still—could take neither of these courses. She had been deceived, and here was not a character ever to trust a second time where she had once been disappointed. Besides, she reasoned, she had been perfectly frank with her suitor. She had told him again and again she was penniless. She had assured him, though she liked and esteemed him, she did not love him.

John Drew had wilfully mistaken her meaning, and had palmed himself off on her as his titled cousin.

After that, to live at his side—to owe her maintenance to him—would have been as gall to her pride.

Besides, he did not want her. Though he tried afterwards to dissemble in the first surprise of his discovery he had let her see plainly a penniless wife was a terrible encumbrance to him, and Janeta would have died rather than have shared his life after this.

She waited until he had gone to his club, then she dressed herself quietly and went out. There was no appearance of haste or secrecy about her departure. She met the landlady

on the stairs, and remarked on the weather with perfect equanimity.

It was only when she had left Cecil-street behind her, and reached the quiet shelter of a corner of the ladies' waiting-room at Charing Cross that she sat down to analyse her position.

We have called her refuge quiet, and it was so in one sense. There was no one to interfere with Janeta, no one to question or disturb her. In a great sorrow there is no isolation so complete, no solitude more soothing, than to sit alone amid a busy crowd, among them but not of them. To see the scething rushing tide of humanity sweeping past us, to feel how vast is the world around teaches us, I think, better than anything else, that no simple person, be they bitter enemy or dearly loved friend, has a right to spoil our life.

It is ours to make or mar. Happiness may be denied us, but it is still in our power to shun the people who cause our misery.

Nettie sat down and thought over her future. Six hours before she had expected to see herself a peeress, the wife of one of the richest noblemen in England; now she was as

poor and friendless as before she went to Dorbury, and burdened with a secret which she must hide from all the world.

She was so young; she knew so little of life and its mysteries of the human heart and its passions that it actually seemed to her, poor girl, if she could only keep her secret, and prevent any one finding out about the ceremony at that grim old city church, it did not matter so very much after all. The world was wide. She and John Drew need never meet. It only meant that she must work hard all her life time. Never now would she make her fortune by a rich marriage.

The clock struck four, and poor Nettie roused herself to face the problem of her future.

She did not think she had mentioned Alice Hutton's name to Mr. Drew. He only knew she was staying with a "friend in Brixton," far too vague a clue for him to try to trace out.

On the other hand, he had heard all about Miss Spargo and the school at Normanton. From that lady it would be easy enough for him to make inquiries; but Janeta remembered glantly that Susan Spargo was her staunch friend, and would hardly refuse a request of hers.

The spinster had already promised not to mention Mrs. Carlyle's situation to Nettie's aunt or anyone at Normanton until it was actually settled. A hint to her and she would refuse absolutely to see Mr. Drew, should he call; the secret might be kept after all.

But Janeta was not fond of leaving things to chance. She asked the attendant for writing materials, and with beating heart began a letter to her husband.

It was like the despairing cry of a creature in mortal pain; short, abrupt, and sad, but for all that it had a strange touch of pathos, as written words when they come straight from an aching heart cannot fail to have.

"You have wrecked my life, ended my childish hopes. I am going where I shall be safe from you; where no one can find me! You will never be troubled by me any more; you will be free in all things, but one last prayer I have to make: do not tell anyone who knew me of our meeting to-day. Let Nathalie still enjoy the memory of her happy days at Dorbury, without guessing the costly price I paid for them. Don't let Miss Spargo know the terrible fate of her favourite pupil. It is my one request, my last prayer. Grant it for your sake and mine, or surely the curse of one you have so cruelly injured will haunt you all your days."

She fastened the letter, and directed it to Mr. Drew's club; then, after she had slipped it into the pillar box, she took an omnibus for Waterloo.

Her mind was quite made up; she would pass a sponge over the events of the morning, and go straight to Richmond as though she had never had any object in coming to London but to beg for the post of Mrs. Carlyle's companion.

Alice Hutton, the kindest and least exacting of women, could easily be told that by the time Janeta's business in London was over, it seemed too late to return to Brixton before she expedition to Richmond.

A superstitious person would have called it a good omen that she just caught the express train to Richmond, and reached the beautiful Surrey resort a few moments before five.

Janeta was not superstitious, and her only feeling as she alighted on the platform was a hope that Mrs. Carlyle would engage her.

She had no special desire to live with that lady for her own sake, but she shrank from even a temporary return to Normanton Hall, because Nathalie would be sure to talk of their pleasant days at Dorbury, and her dear Mr. Drew.

The girl whose fate had been so unpropitious felt, as she reached the Star and Garter, she would rather go to Hillington, were Mrs. Carlyle the fiercest of viragos, than risk the

questioning gaze of Nathalie's dear, childish eyes.

Mrs. Carlyle was at home, and Janeta was ushered into her private sitting-room without delay.

She had made so sure she would never need the situation that our heroine had troubled herself very little about its duties. She could only recall that Mrs. Carlyle was a widow, and well off.

The last companion had left to be married—a fate Nettie decided, with a grim smile, which certainly could not happen to her.

The soft fro-frou of a silken dress, and someone came in.

Janeta felt a vague regret she had not seen Mrs. Carlyle before she married John Drew. A home with that low-voiced, sweet-faced woman might have tempted her to give up her ambitious match.

Mrs. Carlyle was much under fifty, and still bore the traces of great beauty.

Her complexion was as fair and smooth as a girl's, and though a tiny lace cap rested on her rich, brown hair, no one would have called her elderly.

She wore a rich black silk dress, very plainly made, but the ruffles at her neck and wrists were of rare old lace. There was a diamond brooch at her throat, and the hand she offered to Janeta was adorned by two or three rings of almost priceless value.

"I am very pleased to see you, Miss Leigh," she said, quietly. "I have been without a companion nearly a month, and I am anxious to find one, but I would much rather have a friend of Mrs. Hutton than a stranger, so I hope you will not be frightened at the thought of a quiet country life."

Nettie felt ready to cry. It was the first time anyone had spoken to her in that gentle, motherly way.

Miss Spargo had been kind to her, but the schoolmistress was a spinster. She had not that large tenderness of heart, that instinctive sympathy, which only comes, I think, to women who have passed through the joys and griefs of marriage.

"I should like to come to you very much," said Nettie, "but I have no idea what the duties of a companion are; and I am afraid I am very dull." Then came a kind of choked sob in her voice. "I have been doing housework all my life till last August. I don't seem to have had time to learn to be bright and cheerful."

Mrs. Carlyle smiled. "My dear, I think people who are perpetually cheerful, and what one may call aggressively lively, are a great trial. There must be joy and sorrow in every life. I should not like a companion who thought it necessary always to be laughing. Mrs. Hutton tells me you play and sing; that you would not object to reading aloud and answering letters for me. These are the chief requirements."

"I can do all those," said Nettie, brightening; "and I understand cooking and house-keeping. I believe I am clever at millinery. But, Mrs. Carlyle, people never like me. I can't explain it to you, but they don't."

"Mrs. Hutton likes you."

"Oh, yes, and Miss Spargo, too; but none of the girls at Normanton Hall liked me. They said I was cold and disagreeable. You see," and Nettie's voice grew almost pathetic, "I never can think of pleasant things to talk about, and so very often I never talk at all."

"I am not afraid of your being always silent," replied Mrs. Carlyle; "and I will tell you, Miss Leigh, one reason why I think we shall be friends. Long ago, when I was on a visit to one of my sisters, I was very much taken with her governess. It must be twenty years nearly since that time, but I spent three months in the house with Miss Tremaine, and I loved her dearly—almost like a sister. I married, and went to India with my husband for three years. Our correspondence languished, and soon died out; but when I came home I did my best to discover my dear Lucy. I could never find her, and my sister could tell

me nothing of her; but though the years have come and gone, Miss Leigh, I have never forgotten my girlhood's friend, and the moment I saw you I felt reminded of her."

"And it is no wonder, for I am her child," said Nettie, blushing. "At least, my mother's maiden name was Lucy Tremaine, and I always heard she was a governess till she married."

Mrs. Carlyle's eyes filled. "You speak as though she were dead?" "She has been dead for years. I can only just remember her, and how good and gentle she was."

"You are very like her." "Not in character," confessed Janeta. "I think my mother must have been all heart, and I am quite sure I have no heart at all."

"I can't believe that; but your being Lucy Tremaine's child quite decides the matter as far as I am concerned. My dear, do you think you can be happy with your mother's old friend?"

It was on Janeta's lips to say she should never be happy again, but she kept back that rather desponding statement, and answered,—

"I should like of all things to come to you."

"Then can you join me on Monday? I had said to go home then, but I will wait here a few days longer if that will hurry you too much."

Janeta shook her head. "I shall be quite ready by Monday."

"We have forgotten what some people would call the most important point," said Mrs. Carlyle presently. "We have said not a word about salary. I will give you a hundred a year for your private expenditure; everything else will be provided for you just as though you were my daughter. What is your name? I cannot go on thinking of Lucy's children as Miss Leigh."

"I was christened Janeta, but mother always called me Nettie."

"Do you know, Nettie, you owe your name to me? I, too, was christened Janeta, and called Nettie. It must have been in memory of her old friend your mother's friend that name for her little girl."

"I always liked it," said Janeta, slowly. "And your father, is he alive?"

"He has married again, and lives at Sandford."

"Why, that is only twenty miles from us! Perhaps, as Captain Leigh lives at Sandford, you have been over to Hillington?"

"I never was in Yorkshire in my life."

"Then your father has only just gone there?"

"He has been there seven years," and she never tried to check the bitterness in her voice, "but he has never offered for me to visit him. Perhaps it is his wife's fault. I have never seen her, but I believe she is quite young, and might object to a grown-up step-daughter."

"You speak sadly, Nettie, as though the world had been a very hard place to you."

"It has been," asserted Nettie, simply. "I seem to have been an outcast all my life. I never did anyone any harm that I remember, but yet, between me and all things bright and pleasant, there has seemed a great gulf fixed."

The short September day was waning, and the sky was red with the last glimmer of sunset, when Miss Leigh returned to Brixton. Alice Hutton herself opened the door, a great anxiety on her face.

"My dear Nettie, I have been expecting you for hours."

"I could not help it," said Janeta, constrainedly, for there was much in that day's doings she must hide at any cost from her friend. "Indeed, Alice, I did not mean to come home so late, but the time passed quickly, and it was past five when I got to Richmond."

"Then you have seen Mrs. Carlyle? Do you like her? Is anything settled?"

"I am to meet her at King's Cross next Monday," said Janeta, as though she were repeating a lesson learned by rote. "We



are to go down to Hillington by the ten o'clock train, and she is willing to give a hundred a-year for the pleasure of my society."

"But you don't like her."

"What makes you think that?"

"Your voice. I know you of old, Nettie, and I am certain you only speak in that cold, sarcastic way because you are afraid of breaking down altogether, and being natural enough to cry."

She spoke in all kindness; but her words were that proverbial last straw which breaks the camel's back.

Janeta's composure gave way; she buried her face in her hands, and sobbed like a little child. Alice Hutton bent over her tenderly as a sister, trying by every means to soothe her, but in vain.

"You shall not go to Yorkshire, dear," she urged, "if the idea vexes you. We thought you would be happy with Mrs. Carlyle, because my sister was; but girls are different. Stay with us till you hear of someone you like better. Remember, Arthur and I are only too glad to have you, and Miss Spargo wrote to me that she had always a home for you at the Hall; so you see, Nettie, there is not the least need for you to go to Hillington against your will."

Janeta dried her eyes, and tried hard to be calm.

"I want to go to Hillington," she said, slowly, "and I like Mrs. Carlyle very much; but, Alice, I do so wish I had met her sooner!"

Mrs. Hutton had one fault; she was a little too matter-of-fact, given, so to speak, to take everything too literally.

"But, dear, your education was only finished in July! Your father would never have allowed you to take a situation sooner."

"You don't understand. All these years, ever since I came to Aunt Tremaine's, I have just gone on getting harder and harder. No one liked me but Miss Spargo, and I thought her affection was only pity. Alice, my heart was just turned to stone from want of loving and being loved."

Alice bent and kissed her. This revelation from the proud, reserved Janeta touched her deeply.

"And you think you could have loved Mrs. Carlyle?"

"She was my mother's friend. They were girls together. Ever since she came to England she has been trying to find out my mother! And I am called after her. She is another Janeta."

"Then it seems to me, Janeta, your sorrows are ended. Mrs. Carlyle will treat you almost as her own child. You will never be lonely or unloved again. The clouds have rolled back from your sky, dear, and left nothing but sunshine."

A yearning came upon poor Janeta to tell her secret. Already it weighed heavily on her mind, and Alice's sympathy would have been very precious. But she kept silent, partly from shame, and a little because she feared Mrs. Hutton would hold that her right place was at her husband's side.

It was strange that when she went to bed she never thought of the man she had married, never wondered how he bore the news of her loss. Her mind was full of her own future and of plans for keeping her secret; yet just before sleep closed her weary eyes there flashed upon her a recollection of the stranger she had met in the train only the day before, and his creed that every one depends for happiness on their own conduct; that to be true and honest is all that matters since we can run away from all outside enemies, but can never escape the verdict of our own conscience. What would he think of her now?

A strange pain filled the poor girl's heart. It seemed to her she could never hold up her head again since now she had a turned-down page in her life—a secret whose discovery she dreaded.

She wrote to Miss Spargo the next day, as in duty bound, to tell of her success. It was a

difficult letter to write; but Janeta achieved it. She thanked the schoolmistress for all her kindness, and begged her as a last favour not to tell the little world of Normanton where she had gone.

"I know," wrote Janeta, "my petition may seem strange to you; but you know my life at Normanton was practically a failure. No one loved me but you and Nathalie. In a strange place I might make a fresh start, if I was sure no one would identify Mrs. Carlyle's companion with the shabby, awkward girl, whose pride and ungracious temper you bore with so patiently."

Miss Spargo answered the letter by return of post. She congratulated Nettie warmly on her prospects—told her Mrs. Tremaine had been so enraged at losing her unpaid slave that she had not cared to make the least inquiry of her niece's future. She should tell the girls only that Janeta had a situation in the country, and she only hoped the fresh start would be the beginning of a happier life for her favourite.

It was a very kind letter. It enclosed a girlish scrawl from Nathalie, full of regrets for dear old Dorbury, and wonders whether she should ever see "Mr. John" again; but the sigh of satisfaction with which Nettie put her correspondence in her pocket was not caused by Miss Spargo's kindness or Nathalie's affection, but by the certainty her husband had granted her request, and made no attempt to trace her at Normanton.

Both letters were written on Sunday, and if John Drew had intended to cross-examine Miss Spargo about his runaway wife he would have done so within twenty-four hours of her flight. It never occurred to Nettie that he might think she had taken her own life—that the very wording of her passionate note might well justify the idea!

She had only room for the one thought—he had obeyed her desire. He would keep silence about the twenty minutes they had spent together in a grim old city church. She had nothing to fear from him, and but for the gold wedding-ring, looked away in her dream, there was nothing to remind her of the past.

Dr. Hutton decided his patients must be content to do without him till eleven o'clock, and he himself escorted Janeta to King's Cross. He had been very much struck with his wife's friend, Nettie had been in his house only four days, but this keen, clear-headed man understood her better than anyone had yet done. He felt she had in her the making of something very good or very bad.

For Janeta mediocrity was impossible. She looked like a woman who must have a history. The young doctor could not have explained it, but he seemed to know by instinct Miss Leigh's future course would not be the happy, commonplace security of his own wife's. There would be joy and sorrow in store for Janeta, and a terrible struggle between right and wrong.

"You must pay us a longer visit next time," he said cheerfully to Nettie, as they reached King's Cross; "and remember, Miss Leigh, if ever trouble touches you, come to my wife. Alice is very staunch, and she will always be your friend!"

Nettie gave him a grateful glance from her beautiful eyes, but yet his speech or the wording of it troubled her strangely.

"Do you think, then, sorrow is in store for me?"

"I hope not. From what Alice says I should think you had had enough already; but remember, Miss Leigh, if the clouds return you will always find a welcome at our house."

Mrs. Carlyle was there before them, and leaving Janeta in her care the doctor returned to Brixton, his first words to his wife a hope that her friend would be very happy in Yorkshire.

"I am sure of it. Mrs. Carlyle is kinder herself, and Nettie must grow fond of her."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders.

"Arthur! Don't you like my poor little Nettie?"

"So much, dear, that I hope you may prove right; and a few calm, peaceful years in Yorkshire be Miss Leigh's portion—has I doubt it?"

"And why? Mrs. Carlyle is not capricious or changeable!"

"No; but unless I am mistaken, there is a secret in Miss Leigh's life; and Mrs. Carlyle is the last woman in the world to forgive anyone who deceived her."

"Janeta is above deceit."

"But some people call concealing the truth as much deceit as departing from it."

"Arthur! You quite frighten me. Do tell me what you mean?"

"It is nothing, dear; only you recollect how struck my friend Greville seemed with Miss Leigh?"

"I thought he had fallen in love with her at first sight," replied Alice, smiling.

"It seems he went up to London by the same train as she did on Friday morning, and at Ludgate-hill railway-station she was met by a gentleman."

"Her cousin, of course?"

"A man not far from thirty. Now, Alice, the eldest of Mrs. Tremaine's boys can't be over twenty-one."

"Mr. Greville must have been mistaken."

"I think not. Remember how excited she was about that trip to London, how silent she was as to its object. Then, instead of coming home to dinner and starting from there for Richmond in the afternoon she spent the day in London."

"She was at Richmond by five."

"And in London as ten. From ten till four gives a long day. Alice, don't look at me so reproachfully. I am not saying one word against Miss Leigh, but I believe that she has a lover whose existence she has not thought it needful to mention to Mrs. Carlyle."

"Why shouldn't she have a lover?" demanded Alice. "I was younger than Nettie, sir, when you asked me to be your wife."

Dr. Hutton kissed her for the recollection.

"But the cases are not similar. Alice, there was nothing clandestine about our engagement."

"I think you are hard on her, Arthur," persisted Alice. "She may just have met some friend by accident, and not been in his company ten minutes."

It seemed strange to Janeta Leigh, that after dreaming of a honeymoon in Yorkshire, fate should send her to the self-same county as a humble companion, not that there was anything in the least suggestive of inferiority in the treatment she received.

Mrs. Carlyle treated her more as a favourite guest, and throughout the long journey seemed more anxious for her comfort than her own. The confidential maid who was in attendance waited on Miss Leigh as respectfully as on her mistress; and when the ladies left the train at York for lunch none of the people in the spacious refreshment hall would have dreamed from seeing them together their respective relations.

"Are you not tired, Nettie?" said Mrs. Carlyle, as she stirred her coffee. "It is a terrible journey from London to Hillington, but I always say it is worth it. My home is so beautiful!"

"Is Hillington the name of the village, or only of your house?" asked Nettie.

"The name of both. Hillington village boasts three shops, a post office, a church, and a doctor, besides scattered cottages and farm-houses. My home is called Hillington Place, properly speaking, but most people leave out one-half of its title. My London friends always call it simply Hillington, while my neighbours speak of it simply as the Place."

"And have you lived there long?" asked Janeta, who was not at all inquisitive; but

wished to seem interested in one who was so kind to her.

"More than fifteen years. We returned from India when my husband came into the property. We had no children," she said, with a heavy sigh, "and so he left me Hillington Place for my life, with the proviso I was to bequeath it to one of his kindred. His relations are so numerous that I need be in no difficulty to find a successor; but I confess as yet I have shrunk from the task. I do not even know all his nephews, and his cousins are so plentiful I have never counted them up. My lawyer is always urging me to make a will, but I keep putting it off."

"And do the relations all come and try to please you?" inquired Miss Leigh. "It must be perplexing."

"Some come; others are proud, and shun me lest I should fancy they want my property. I am not sure but what I like those best. I often wish my husband had left a different will; but he had been abroad ever since his boyhood, and died only six months after our return. He knew next to nothing of his own relations, and perhaps he thought the choice would be a little occupation for him."

"I should choose the one most like Mr. Carlyle, or one called after him."

"My dear, they are none of them like him, and Geoffrey is such a family name with us. There must be at least a dozen Carlyles who bear it, to say nothing of his sister's sons. My husband was the eldest of twelve, and the only one who died childless, so you may imagine how extensive my choice is."

They were soon taking their seats for Hillington, where they hoped to arrive by six o'clock.

Mrs. Carlyle told Janeta she trusted it would be a happy home for her, and that she would try to forget she was motherless.

"You are so kind," whispered Nettie. "If only I had known you long ago how much brighter my life might have been!"

"Well, love, we have lost a few years of each other's friendship; but I hope a great many remain to us. You will soon look stronger, Nettie, in our beautiful north-country air."

Janeta had a question hovering on her lips. "Mrs. Carlyle, if you have nieces won't they be angry at your being so kind to me?"

"My dear Nettie," said the widow, laughing, "I have—or rather the Major had—a round dozen of nieces, but I gave out long ago that I couldn't have a dozen companions, and considered it unfair to select one and disappoint her eleven cousins. My companions have hitherto been great favourites with my relatives, whose jealousy you perceive is not of strangers, but of each other. All the family know that the Place, its furniture and income, plate, jewels, carriages, and horses must come to one of them. My own savings, and anything I have bought since my husband's death, of course belong to me absolutely; but these spoils are too small to attract the attention of people who aspire to thirty thousand a year!"

"Thirty thousand a year!" breathed Janeta, awe-struck. "Have you really such an enormous income?"

"Yes," replied her friend; "but you need not envy me, dear. I would have faced the world without a penny could it have prolonged my husband's life. I would have resigned every shilling of his property could he but have left me in its stead a little child!"

Nettie pressed her hand.

The train was punctual to a minute; but Nettie decided Hillington must be a far more important place than she had imagined, for quite a dozen people stood on the platform, and all seemed to belong to the upper ten.

Miss Leigh would have said two passengers were the utmost that could be expected from that little rustic station.

It was only a short train (a very few carriages "made up" at the last junction as sufficient for this little-used, unimportant line); but still it seemed to Janeta all the little group of passengers need not have made

in a body for their carriage, since six was the limit of its accommodation; but a surprise awaited her.

A very stout, elderly gentleman flung open the door, and standing bare-headed on the steps, seized Mrs. Carlyle's hand, crying,—

"Welcome home, sister!"

A thin, and it must be confessed rather vinegar-faced, lady, soon pushed him away, and claimed her innings.

"I am rejoiced, dearest Janeta, to see you safely back. The dear girls are all here to welcome you, and—"

Mrs. Carlyle cut this harangue short.

"If you'll kindly stand aside, Susan, I should like to get out; neither of us wish to be carried on to Whitby, and the train is just starting."

"Susan," abashed, retreated, and Mrs. Carlyle got out of the carriage, refusing all offers of assistance, which were at once transferred to Janeta.

Miss Leigh never felt sure how many people aided her safe progress to the ground; and when she turned to look for her bag she discovered a tall, maypole of a boy hugging it, while her umbrella and rugs were safe in someone else's keeping.

Altogether, fourteen relatives had come to meet Mrs. Carlyle: Uncle Augustus (the stout gentleman), and two of his boys; Aunt Susan, and five girls, while the rest of the number consisted of stray nephews and cousins, who had managed somehow to spare time to assist at their wealthy relative's arrival.

"This is terrible!" whispered Mrs. Carlyle to Janeta when, at the mention of the carriage, half a dozen relatives had flown to hasten it. "They all expect to be asked to dinner."

"All?" Janet smiled. "But would the cook have enough for them to eat?"

"I dare not ask one without the other. I must think."

Only a moment, and she was smiling sweetly on her opacious brother-in-law.

"Augustus, I am too tired to talk to anyone to night; but I do hope you and the boys will come up to dinner to-morrow." Then, as Aunt Susan began to look ominously grave, "I shall be so pleased to see you all," she gave a comprehensive smile, which included even the cousins. "It seems a long time since I was at home. Ah!" as delighted acceptances began to be uttered; "then I shall expect everyone at seven exactly."

Uncle Augustus handed her to the carriage; Aunt Susan wrapped her shawl round her; the younger generation performed various minor services, and then the word of command was given, the beautiful bay horses dashed off at a quick trot, and poor Mrs. Carlyle was free from her relations.

For a few moments there was perfect silence; then the widow took Nettie's hand.

"My dear child, you seemed to think me a very enviable person when you heard I had thirty thousand a year. Don't you pity me now?"

"But you need not live here," persisted Nettie. "You might go away, and live quietly somewhere else."

Mrs. Carlyle shook her head.

"Property has its duties, my dear! I should not like to neglect mine; but, you see, wealth has drawbacks."

"Are they so very poor?" asked Nettie.

"Augustus Carlyle has seven hundred a year. He is the Vicar of Hellington, and I really think a good man; but he has a large family, and I suppose has grown to think one of his boys ought to be my heir. Susan Boden I am really sorry for. She is an officer's widow, with very scanty means; and she has seven daughters, the plainest and most uninteresting girls you ever saw."

"And do they always behave like that?"

"They never show to advantage together. I like my relations best in instalments; but you see they all expected to come to dinner, so I could not make exceptions. I should not

wonder, Nettie, if you liked some of them very much when you get used to their little ways."

Janeta shook her head.

"I am sure I shall not."

"Poor things!" said Mrs. Carlyle, gently. "It is very sad to see them so eager for money; but, Janeta, at least they are open about it. They never try to hide their hopes. I confess I can pardon anything better than concealment; it seems to me only another name for deceit!"

A five miles drive brought them to Hillington Place.

Janet Leigh almost forgave the cupidty of Mrs. Carlyle's relations when she saw the grand old house nestling among venerable trees, where the woodman's axe had not been heard for centuries.

Mrs. Carlyle spent her money lavishly, and the place was kept up sumptuously.

The lawns were smooth and even as velvet; the grounds were bright with innumerable flowers, while the roses, the orchards, and the hothouses were celebrated for miles round.

The house itself was of stone, brown and grey, with the dust of centuries. One side was almost covered by ivy. A kind of terrace, or verandah, ran on every side; but on three it had been roofed-in entirely with glass, so as to form a sort of winter-garden.

The carriage stopped at the centre of the fourth side. A flight of rugged steps led up to the terrace just in front of the grand entrance.

The door stood open, as was the custom, from early morning till the hour of evening prayers, when the butler presented the keys to his lady on a silver salver.

Within was a square hall provided with a table, chairs, and various newspapers. At one angle was a kind of office with a glass front, not so much unlike the box office of a theatre. Here a servant always sat. He was styled the porter; and it was his province to take messages, receive letters, and answer questions; while, in the case of visitors, he rang a bell, which sounded straight into the butler's pantry.

The porter had a good salary, and occupied a cottage in the grounds. His hours were from nine till eight. Before and after those times a footman was always on duty in the hall. The object of having the porter was that, in days gone by, the hall had been a favourite gathering-place for guests who would not have cared for a servant in their midst, while the porter in his little office was quite out of their way.

Janeta only learned these particulars gradually. This first night she did not even see the porter; she only noticed the dark oak floor, covered with bright eastern rugs, the flowers in old china pots standing about at intervals, and the crowd of servants gathered to receive their lady—the butler looking as much a gentleman as some of Mrs. Tremaine's lodgers marshalling the men, the housekeeper, in black silk and starched apron, heading the maids.

Mrs. Carlyle had a kindly word for each, shaking hands with Mr. and Mrs. Hill.

"This is my dear friend, Miss Leigh!" she said quietly, indicating Janeta. "I know you will do your best to make her comfortable at Hillington," she said to the old housekeeper.

Hill smiled assent, struck, perhaps, by the strange dignity and aristocratic bearing of the stranger.

"I have had the blue-rooms prepared for the young lady, madam, and I thought Nancy should wait on her for the present."

The blue rooms were the prettiest Nettie had ever occupied. They seemed to be fit for a queen; and Nancy was a bright, handy girl, who served her with respectful attention, and seemed to take a pleasure in arranging the masses of red-gold hair.

"Dinner will not be for half-an-hour, miss," she said, when her task was ended. "Mrs. Carlyle likes to rest a little when she has come off a journey. Will you wait here, or shall I show you the way to the drawing-room?"

Nettie elected to go to the drawing-room,



and announced herself in a luxurious chair near the centre table.

Left alone, she looked around the beautiful room with a sigh of pure content.

She did so love all that was bright and attractive, this poor little lonely child. It seemed to Janeta people who had pretty things around them must surely grow good just by looking at them. She had a sensitive, artistic nature, and the long, lofty room, furnished in pale blue and ebony, charmed her taste.

Down one side were seven French windows opening on to the terrace or winter garden.

The others were hung with curtains of pale blue silk, interspersed with fine venetian mirrors, let in to the wall from floor to ceiling. One recess was quite filled with old china; another contained a miniature grotto and fernery.

And such a house might have been hers! Alandyke was probably as grand as Hillington place.

Janeta gave one sigh for the position she had once fancied her own; and then, determined to banish sad thoughts, she took up an album and began to turn over the leaves.

She was not fond of photographs, but in this case she felt interested in them.

Mrs. Carlyle's story had taken a great hold on her imagination. She believed she should recognise the "kindred," from other people by their anxious, expectant look; but in this she failed. The book, though it certainly contained the portrait of Uncle Augustus and his boys, was also honoured by a picture of Alice Hutton and her sister. Clearly, therefore, Mrs. Carlyle did not put the "candidates for wealth" in an album by themselves, and Janeta found her powers of guessing them by instinct fail. The album was for the most part filled with the photographs of fine-looking men and gentle, attractive women; but they did not carry their history on their face.

Janeta was about to close the heavy book, when on the last page she saw something which sent every drop of blood from her heart and made her feel ready to faint.

It was the portrait of her husband—of the man who had deceived her, and whom she had forsaken—John Drew.

At that very moment the lady of the house appeared.

(To be continued.)

## LUIDUILTE'S LOVERS.

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### CHAPTER V.—(continued.)

"I HAVE done nothing wrong," Luiduilte said at last, closing her lips in a firm line and lifting her head in the cold, haughty way which had earned for her the name of "proud."

Anger had taken the place of her first feeling of contrition. What had she done to merit being spoken to in such terms?

If her aunt had not been so cold and hard Llanoe would now be openly her affianced husband; and so she spoke coldly and clearly.

"Very well; you go out no more alone. When is your next day for visiting these poor people?"

Luiduilte felt the sneer in her aunt's voice, and it goaded her to passionate anger.

"I will not tell you. I might lie, but I will not, and I refuse to be treated like a person of—"

"You are my ward, and I will do as I please. When next you visit your pensioners I will accompany you," replied her aunt, sternly, and Luiduilte bowed, feeling too angry to speak aught but angry words, and not wishing to feel in the after time that she had been guilty of disrespect to one who had acted the part of a tender, loving mother to her.

"I shall not go to the opera to night," she

said, quietly, and Mdlle. answered in the same tones,—

"That is as you please, only as it is the young Count, François Rouget, who was to take us I regret your decision."

"Why! because he was to take us? Surely it will be easier to make your excuses to such an old friend," returned the girl, coldly.

Luiduilte was learning the art of fencing, but it cost her much to appear so calm and self-possessed.

"It is because he is such an old friend, or rather the son of such an old friend, that I am vexed, and," with a keen, significant glance, which it was useless to even pretend not to interpret, "because I wish you to stand well in his estimation."

Luiduilte did not immediately reply, but stood as though battling with herself, her gaze bent on the flowers at the window, which she saw not. A thousand expressions flitted across the dark, southern face, with its lines of Patrician beauty. And Mdlle. D'Almaine waited, gazing on the picture of loveliness her niece made as she stood there in the morning sunlight, then Luiduilte turned.

"Auntie, *ma mignonne*, *ma petite mère*, do not seek to ruin my life, our lives. You are making such a dreadful mistake."

Her voice was thrilling with love and entreaty, her dusky eyes liquid with emotion, and the fair face had grown pale with emotion. The uplifted, clasped hands, the whole attitude of beseeching, moved the aunt's loving soul, but, she told herself, a good surgeon cuts deep in order to ensure a perfect cure.

Llanoe Grey was an utterly worthless scamp, and she must take strong measures, and at once, to keep him from her niece's society. So she hardened herself against the girl's piteous pleading, though she longed to take her in her arms, and soothe her with tender caresses.

"No, Luiduilte, it is you who are mistaken," she replied. "I cannot alter my decision. I have some letters of importance to write, and wish to be alone," and her niece went without another word.

### CHAPTER VI.

THE morning dawned fair and lovely; and as Luiduilte went to her window and drew aside the soft lace curtains, the first golden rays of the rising sun fell across the quiet city.

No black disfiguring smoke rose here with the sun as in London. The streets gradually became peopled, and the sounds of busy life in the air told that the city was awakening after its short sleep, and a half-fear crept into Luiduilte's heart as she thought of what this day was to be to her.

Llanoe had not made any appointment, any arrangement, as to how they were to meet; but she felt sure that he would make known to her the means during the morning, and she was not mistaken.

Mademoiselle, her aunt, was very silent, but not morose or stern, during breakfast. Once she broke it, looking up from the perusal of a letter to say,—

"You are looking pale, *ma petite*!" the old familiar term of endearment, which made the girl's heart leap, and a wild longing enter it to throw herself in those loved arms and confess all. "Did you sleep well?"

"Very well, thank you, auntie!" In truth, she had scarcely closed her eyes.

After this there was silence again, which lasted until the meal was finished; then Mdlle. D'Almaine rose, gathering up her papers.

"I have a number of letters to write this morning," she said, pausing at the door of the small chintz-furnished breakfast-room. "You will, I dare say, find something to occupy yourself with until luncheon. There are those Chinese ornaments to look over and choose from;" and then she left the girl to her own reflections.

Not a word of reminder. No injunctions to

remain at home, only a quiet matter-of-course manner that, while it irritated, yet stung Luiduilte with remorse. Her aunt would never dream of such an act of disobedience as she was about to commit, and yet were there not extenuating circumstances?

But she was not long left to her self-communings. As she crossed the room and looked out of the window she saw Colonel Dalziel pass along.

He did not pause, but as he neared their house he raised his eyes swiftly, then turned abruptly down a street nearly opposite, and Luiduilte's instinct told her that she must follow in his footsteps.

Going swiftly up to her room, she donned a soft blue cloak that revealed enough of the rounded figure to show its exquisite outlines, a bonnet with marabout feathers of the same hue, and parasol completed the toilette, which was charmingly simple and elegant.

Going down was the difficulty. She feared that on hearing her footsteps her aunt might come out to make some inquiry or remark and discover her in out-door attire!

But no such *contretemps* occurred, and in a few moments she was out in the street, where the bright sunlight falling on the pure whiteness of the stone houses made a blinding glare, which dazzled her for a few seconds; then with a boldness, born of desperation, she went swiftly across the broad road and disappeared round the corner of the street down which Colonel Dalziel had gone.

As she had surmised he was waiting, and on beholding her came forward with unaffected eagerness, clasping the little trembling hand she held out in a close and protecting clasp.

"I almost feared you would not understand. I saw you at the window, and so I risked it," he said quickly.

Luiduilte was silent—for a very good reason, she had nothing to say. A great weight of embarrassment fell upon her as she thought of what she was about to do, and, somehow, the Colonel's manner seemed to have a *souçon* of flippancy in its tones.

"Where is Lord Vermont?" she asked at last, feeling that she must speak.

They had been walking at least half-an-hour, and were nearing the barrier of the city, and Llanoe had not appeared.

"He is outside the barrier, as we deemed it safest for him not to be seen as yet in your company," returned the Colonel. Then added, with a slight bow, "You must excuse my making you walk, but you know it is against the laws of French propriety for a young lady to drive alone with anyone save her betrothed."

Luiduilte bowed in response. This, then, was what her aunt had meant about that drive with Llanoe.

Her lovely face flushed hotly, and a heavy sense of shame weighed her down.

She never forgot that walk through the streets of Paris, though she never was quite sure in which direction she went; for her proud dark head, held always so calmly erect, was now drooped as though to hide it from the gaze of passers-by.

A dark cloud seemed to be hovering over her, and a strange sense of shame pervaded her whole being. Luiduilte Dene would never become hardened in wrong doing.

On, on, her companion led her, out of the city now. They had reached the barrier and passed through, the men staring in mute but not rude admiration at the beautiful southern face drooping like a fainting flower.

They smiled when the yellow-haired Englishman sprang forward to greet them, and guessed part of their history. Would they have smiled could they have seen that lovely face as it look one short year after?

A carriage was in waiting, and soon they were whirling along the dry, dusty road.

Not a word was spoken after the first greetings until the carriage drew up before a small house nestling among climbers now in their first spring freshness. Here and there a French poplar reared its head, adding stiffness but not beauty to the scene. At the gate stood

a man, with an unctuous smiling countenance, in the garb of a priest, who had emerged from the house on hearing wheels.

He opened the gate, speaking a few words in an oily voice which struck unpleasantly even upon Luiduile's ears, who was accustomed to the suavity of priests. But there was no time to indulge in prejudices.

The father was leading the way to the house, and the girl followed, looking and feeling like one in a dream.

She took no notice of the house, which, at another time, would have charmed her, for Pere Balsaine was a man of culture, and had gathered a pile of rarities from all nations, which were placed with taste in the several rooms through which they passed. But as they entered the apartment where the ceremony was to take place she turned to Llanoe, her lovely eyes filled with trouble and entreaty.

"Oh, Llanoe!" she cried, "even now I shrink from this act. My aunt has been more than a mother to me, for she is the only relation I have; yet I have never wanted more. Will not my disobedience bring its own punishment?"

"You have all a French girl's fear of your relatives, and I would not have urged you to this had I known of any other way of securing my darling for myself!" whispered Llanoe. "You will be mine for life now! Are you afraid? If so, I will wait."

"No, Llanoe, I cannot risk being parted," she replied, seeing the bitter struggle her lover had within himself as he could utter these words, and, woman-like, she forgot her own fears in witnessing his pain.

Then Lord Vermont turned to the priest, who had retired to the far end of the room with the Colonel, and handing him a piece of paper said,—

"We are ready."

It seemed to Luiduile that she knelt for ages, while, after a few hurried words, the priest uttered a slow, impressive benediction, and then bade her rise, saying,—

"May I be the first to congratulate your ladyship?"

The girl raised her eyes, a startled light leaping to them. "Your ladyship! It had never occurred to her that she must take her husband's title. She was now Lady Vermont! Surely if her aunt sought a marriage of distinction for her she would deem an earl-high enough in the social scale for her!

A few more hurried words, and then Lord Vermont turned to the girl he believed to be his wife, and led her out into the bright sunshine.

As he placed her in the carriage, under pretence of settling her cloak, he bent over her, and laid his first kiss on his wife's lips; and she blushing, yet with a brightness on her face, her whole, pure soul shining in the deep wells of her dark, passionate eyes, whispered,—

"Yours now, for life and all time!"

Ah, Luiduile, the day is not yet ended!

Colonel Dalsiel was in strangely gay spirits. He laughed, he joked, he told stories which made smiles and laughter ripple over face and lip of both listeners.

Never doubting but that the ceremony just performed had been legal, they laughed gaily at his comic description of how Mlle. D'Almaine would receive the news. Now that it was all over, and they were returning, Luiduile felt glad—nay, wildly joyous. Llanoe and she were man and wife, and nothing could separate them. They were going back to confess their fault, and seek the forgiveness which surely her aunt would accord when she found that they were married for good and all.

People talk of presentiments, and of coming events casting their shadow before, yet the sunlight that lay across the roadway seemed to have crept also into Luiduile's heart, and the scarlet lips were parted in a happy smile. Llanoe's face was transfigured, and the yellow curls that clustered round the white brow seemed to have imprisoned the golden sunlight in their meshes, and his fear-

less, loving eyes were dark, like purple pansies with joy.

And Colonel Dalsiel leant back against the soft cushions, smiling to himself as he thought of the consternation a certain telegram which had come for Lord Vermont that morning—and which he had, unthinkingly, of course, thrown among his own papers—would cause. He had told his man to set those to rights, and bring any letters or telegrams round to Mlle. D'Almaine's at once, or perhaps, it would be better to meet them at the gates of Paris.

So it was, that when they alighted at the barrier they were met by a dapper little French valet, who handed Lord Vermont the telegram without any explanation.

Then a sudden pallor overspread the handsome face, and the brightness died out of it as he read the few words therein.

"Anything wrong at home?" asked the Colonel, though he knew well already the contents.

Llanoe looked up with a dazed expression, and catching sight of Luiduile's pallid, frightened face, gave a half-suppressed groan.

"Matter?" he said, hoarsely, yet quietly, "my sister is dying. I should have had this before breakfast. Luiduile, I must go; you see that there is no time to lose. I may catch the boat even now; if not—" he could not finish.

"You must go, of course," replied Luiduile, in the same calm tones, but with a world of anguish in her eyes. "What shall I tell my aunt, Llanoe?"

The power of strong self-repression in the girl's character came out in this hour of need. No useless clinging to her loving husband, no tears, only that quiet look of agony in the depths of her eyes, that ring of pain in the sweet, clear voice.

"Nothing, until I write or come. It can make no difference, and I would be with you, if possible, when the truth is told."

Then he took her hand in his, holding it long and lingeringly, gazing into the lovely face, so pale now, the while. He could not kiss those quivering lips, for they had left the carriage, and were amidst the bustling crowds of people passing to and fro. That one caress was all he would have to remember in the future.

"Good-bye," he muttered huskily. "Heaven bless you, my darling!" and then he hurried away leaving her standing by Colonel Dalsiel's side, dazed, and unable to move.

"He will just catch the boat?" observed he, taking out his watch. "And now, miss—I beg pardon, Lady Vermont—I will escort you home."

"Miss Dene, if you please, until Llanoe claims me! You must not call me by that name, or you may forget in the presence of others," returned Luiduile, with a touch of weariness in her voice. Why was it that everything went wrong in her life? When she thought she held the cup of happiness in her hands, and placed it near her lips, lo! its contents proved to be a draught of bitter disappointment.

"As you wish. Where you are concerned I have no desire. Your will is mine."

In her present state of mind, Luiduile failed to discern the ring of passion in the cold, clear voice, and as they had arrived at the door of her home she paused, saying,—

"Would you rather not come in?"

"Do you wish it?"

"To tell the truth, Colonel Dalsiel," replied Luiduile, with weary frankness, "I have no knowledge of possessing any particular desires at the present moment. I am too bewildered by the events of the morning."

"Not common ones assuredly," he rejoined, hiding his chagrin at her utter absence of feeling for him. "You are to be pardoned. I will not trespass on your hospitality now. Good-day! and lifting his hat he walked leisurely away."

Mlle. D'Almaine was in her own room when her niece passed the door but she was

not unaware of the fact that she had been out, for she called to her as she passed.

"I wanted you, Luiduile. Where have you been, child?" Here am I at a standstill because of you."

Luiduile went into the pretty, tastefully-furnished room, very much like her own, and crossing to the window paused at her aunt's side, standing unconsciously just where the sunlight fell full upon her. Mlle. looked up at her, wondering at her silence, and the sight of that lovely white face, with its dark, sorrow-laden eyes, sent a shock of pain through her.

"You wanted me, auntie. I am sorry!" she said, and the clear, sweet voice, once so blithe and careless, sounded like the voice of one whom a sudden sorrow has fallen.

"Luiduile, what ails you? You frighten me. You are like a ghost!" she cried out, rising hurriedly.

"I am well enough, auntie. I have walked too far, and am tired. I shall be myself again after a rest," she answered, trying to smile.

Ah, Luiduile, you will never be yourself again. The past is gone and can never return. Only the uncertain future is yours. That must come. What will it bring for thee!

Mlle. forgot all about the letter she was writing, and hurried off to get some restorative in the shape of a glass of wine, after which she insisted on her niece's going to lie down in her room, a suggestion which Luiduile was very glad to take advantage of. There was no engagement for that evening, and their dinner was a very quiet affair, partaken of at eight o'clock than Mlle. seeing that the girl was really not well, sent her off to bed; where she tossed restlessly to and fro until early morning. So ended Luiduile's wedding-day!

## CHAPTER VII.

Three days came and went, and no word from Llanoe; but Luiduile would not allow herself to think this strange. How could he find time to write with his sister sick unto death? Perhaps she was dead, and he was bowed under the weight of his sorrow. At this last thought a great pitiful longing to have him near her, to comfort him by the might of her own love, entered her soul, and the tears filled her lovely eyes. Poor Llanoe! how dreadful it would be for him!

Colonel Dalsiel had called several times, and they knew that he also had received no message. He was waiting, he told them, for orders, as at present he knew not if his pupil would return to Paris or remain in England.

His perfect courtesy won both women's hearts, and Luiduile grew to like him cordially for the utter absence of secrecy in his dealings with her, even when speaking of Llanoe, for in Mlle's presence they did not mention his name often.

Luiduile's manner puzzled her aunt. There was no semblance of sorrow or pain; but a great change had come over her, a calm dignity, a quiet thoughtfulness that made her more lovely than ever in the eyes of her numberless admirers.

But there came another change soon, which pained as well as puzzled Mlle. D'Almaine. One day, a month after Llanoe's hurried departure, Colonel Dalsiel called upon her aunt, and though he was quiet and easy in his manner, Luiduile felt that there was news; and when he asked permission to take her for a walk, she gave her aunt no opportunity for a refusal, exclaiming—

"I will come with pleasure! I am stifling here indoors!" And Mlle. was silent.

The Colonel, though she felt quite sure he loved her niece, was so much older, and in every way not at all the kind of man who would attract her. So she settled it in her own mind, and had no fear that others might think differently.

The Colonel did not speak of Llanoe, even



when he and his companion were far away from the house, among a crowd of people who would take no notice of them, save to request a passage with the customary *pardonnez* now and again, and Luiduile waited for him to broach the subject. Then, finding that he did not speak, she broke the silence which had fallen upon them.

"You have heard from Llanoe?" she asked, in low, anxious tones.

"I have, and it was to tell you so that I asked you to accompany me in my evening stroll; and now you are here I dare scarcely tell the contents of Lord Vermont's letter!" He spoke in a grave, earnest manner, with a tinge of pain in his voice that startled Luiduile.

"His sister is dead, and he cannot come yet," responded the girl, sadly. "I feared it when he went. Poor Llanoe!"

They had walked on some distance from their house, and were near the Jardin Des Plantes, and the Colonel led her to one of the most sequestered seats, begging her in supplicating tones to be calm, and of course arousing all the quick, impatient fear of her passionate nature.

"No, his sister is better. It is not that. Oh, Mlle. Dene, can you not guess? See, I call you Dene, and we are alone. Do you not guess now?" he exclaimed, hurriedly.

"I do not understand you," she said quietly, her lips white as the fleur-de-lis near the seat. "But you frighten me with that wild manner of yours. Tell me, what is it that has happened?"

"Something far worse than death. I will read you his letter." There was a solemnity in his tones that struck terror to Luiduile's heart, and bending her proud dark head she asked piteously,—

"Has he not written to me?"

"No. Here is my letter."

Colonel Dalziel drew a bulky envelope from an inner pocket, and extracting the contents with a cold deliberation that made all the girl's highly-wrought nerves quiver, looked down the pages of the epistle; then glancing up with a plying smile he observed,—

"I would scarcely dare read such words, only they are a message. Of course the letter commences as all others; then—'My sister is better, much better, and I have decided on remaining in England. The matter does not relish the idea of losing sight of me again, especially as a pet hobby of hers might be sent to the winds by my so doing. Now for the hobby! It is no other than that I should wed a young lady whose estates adjoin mine!'"

Luiduile, sitting under the shade of the trees with white, set faces, and closed lips, through which the warm breath scarce seemed to pass, did not see the lines after these last words which the Colonel omitted. She only heard those that followed, and the calm and peace of her young life died out under their influence.

"The idea meets with my utmost approval, as you may guess, and it only remains for you to make things all right with Luiduile. Explain to her the informality in our marriage, and assure her that I did not mean it at the time, but that now it seems Providence has worked all things for the best. I hope the marriage will take place before Christmas, and I can imagine the eulogiums on the bride's beauty. Give my warmest regards to Mlle. D'Almsine—"

"Shall I read on?" asked the Colonel, pausing. "There is nothing more about yourself, only instructions for my return to England, and the setting of some bills, &c."

"You have read all that concerns me!" returned Luiduile, lifting her eyes, black with passionate sorrow, to his face and smiling—yes, smiling quietly—"I will return home, if you do not mind, and write to Lord Vermont. It would be a pity to keep him in suspense when he is so anxious for the wedding to take place in the autumn," she added, still with that cold, frozen smile on the perfect lips, a smile sadder far than all tears, that did not

brighten in the slightest degree the sombre pain of the dusky eyes.

"Mlle.," exclaimed Colonel Dalziel, "I feel that you will ever regard me as a kind of bird of evil omen after this. Can you forgive me for having been the bearer of such news?"

Luiduile turned to him, her eyes shining with a quick glow of gratitude; and his guilty, wicked heart gave a sudden bound.

"Of you I shall ever think as of one who tried all in his power to promote my happiness," she cried passionately. "That you failed is no fault of yours; and tell me, is it really true beyond a doubt that our marriage was not legal? I am half-bewildered, and take things too much for granted."

"Unhappily, it is a fact. One great thing is that you are a Roman Catholic, and Llanoe is a Protestant, and there was only a Roman priest present at the ceremony. Then there are other informalities. I inquired into all this before delivering Lord Vermont's letter, which I received yesterday.

"Do not say unhappily. It is better so, since he wishes it," rejoined Luiduile. "Now I am quite sure that there is no mistake I can write to him! I will give it into your charge when finished if you have no objection."

"I shall be only too happy to do anything to assist you, Mlle. Dene," he answered; and then they passed out of the garden, and pursued their way towards the home where Llanoe had come to Luiduile in the gloaming.

At Luiduile's request the Colonel went up with her when they reached the house. She did not feel equal at present even to sustain a conversation with her aunt, and excused herself before he took his departure, much to Mlle.'s surprise. Greatly to his surprise, as Colonel Dalziel passed down the stairs after bidding good-day to Mlle. D'Almsine, Luiduile appeared before him, her large eyes aglow with passionate anger, making the calm pale face terrible in its quiet.

"You did not tell me, I did not understand. Did Llanoe say he was unaware of the illegality of our marriage?" she asked, in a hurried whisper.

"He says so, but he knew from the first. Pere Balzaine told me when I persisted in questioning him. Shall I come to-morrow for your letter?"

She bowed her head, and stood aside for him to pass.

The Colonel's tact was perfect, and he knew that in her first agony it were best not to say more than was absolutely necessary. Her pride would rise paramount, and then he would speak!

And Luiduile went back to her room, and seated herself at her handsome writing desk. But words did not come as easily as she had felt they would. She dipped the pen in the ink, wrote her address, and the two words "Lord Vermont," and could go no farther. What could she say? It must be in the fewest words she sent him her farewell, and in such wise as to show no sign of this burning pain in her head, this terrible heart-sickness that seems to have taken all the beauty, youth, and freshness out of her life.

An hour passed, and the paper remained unmarked; then suddenly she bent forward, and the pen flew swiftly over the page for a few moments. When she paused it was to lay her beautiful dark head down on the paper and sob as those sob whose hearts are broken. By-and-by she took up the letter, and scanned it over with a strange mixture of love and scorn in her passionate eyes. It ran thus:

"Lord Vermont,—My lord, Colonel Dalziel has given me your message, and while appreciating the delicate regrets expressed in your letter, I beg to state that the discovery of the informality in that absurd ceremony has afforded me much pleasure. I shall shortly return to England, where I believe we shall be neighbours, and hope to make your mother's acquaintance, and perhaps that of your wife

then. I deemed it better to write myself to you, as then you will understand that there is no cause for future trouble or anxiety—I remain, yours in haste,

"LUIDUILE DENE."

Next day Colonel Dalziel called to inquire after the health of the two ladies. Luiduile was radiant, lovely, bright laughter tipped over her rich red lips, and not a trace of care or pain was on the rare, sweet face; but the Colonel saw the proud defiance of the dusky eyes, and told himself that he would do well to strike while the iron was hot!

## CHAPTER VIII.

The days passed swiftly by. A week had flown since Luiduile sat on that seat in the Jardin Des Plantes, and heard her doom. There was a grand performance at the Theatre Francaise, and Luiduile and her aunt, accompanied by Colonel Dalziel, were there. On the entrance of this small party a hundred loggnettes went up, and soon their number was doubled three fold. No reason now to complain of coldness. Where Luiduile before had driven men mad by her hauteur and indifference, she now fascinated and enthralled them by her vivacity and wit, the brilliancy of her smiles, and the softness of her laugh, that had in it a ring of sarcasm, and the great dark eyes, with that luminous, passionate defiance in their depths. The beauty had awakened to a knowledge of her power, they said among themselves, and was more love-inspiring than ever.

And Luiduile never once thought of her rare beauty. The homage of these men did not give her the pleasure they thought it did. For, in her gratification, there was a spice of cruelty. She would draw men thus to worship at her shrine; when in England Llanoe should see that what she threw away was fought for by others. Poor Frenchmen, keep your hearts safe. She is only practising on you in order to gall the hearts of one Englishman.

Luiduile never refused invitation to ball, opera, or conversation now; and after the opera, there was an engagement for a ball at the Duchess of S—

The young Count, Francois Rouget, was there; and though fascinated with the rest by the wonderful, radiant beauty, her manner caused him some uneasiness.

To his keen eyes there was a restlessness in her vivacity, a cynicism in her repartee; and when she spoke with a smile on her lips, her eyes were heavy with pain.

He knew that Lord Vermont had been called suddenly home, and he knew no more. Had this golden-haired Englishman, with the face of a god, played her false? At this thought, the Frenchman's inborn love of duelling showed itself, and Francois Rouget told himself that he would willingly fall in avenging a slight to Luiduile. He was wise, and did not speak his thoughts to her. One thing puzzled him, and that was the constant attendance of the Colonel.

He had an instinctive dislike of the man, though he could not put it into words; and even if he had he could not go to Luiduile Dene and say,—

"Do not trust that man, because I dislike and fear him."

She would laugh in his face.

What would then have been his feelings could he have followed the Colonel and Luiduile as, after a walk to the lovely music of "Walt Von dir," he led her to a conservatory to rest?

The music came to them in low, murmurous tones, and the air, rich with perfume, was filled with the sound of hidden fountains.

Colonel Dalziel had led Luiduile to a seat where scarcely any would think of going by reason of the tall shrub that appeared to bar the way; and here he paused, he looking down on the lovely face, a little weary, now that

there was no one to make observations on her looks.

"Miss Dene," he said, at length, breaking the silence suddenly; and she looked up into the keen eyes, and saw there what made her droop her own in swift amazement. "Miss Dene, Luiduilte, I have loved you since that first evening in —, when I saw you standing under the acacias, with the sunset lights about your head—loved you wildly, passionately, as men do who at my age can say women's looks have been nought to me hitherto save as a pastime, a—"

"You love me!" cried the girl, unable to control her astonishment. "You loved me when you sought to wed me to another!"

"I loved and love you!" he returned, vehemently. "But never did I intend you to learn my secret. Now it is different. I am not showing any dishonour in declaring my passion, and I ask only a little love from the woman who has all my own!"

Luiduilte sat perfectly still, her great dark eyes looking into space, and reflecting the thoughts that passed swiftly through her busy brain. The strength and purity of the man's love, as represented by himself, touched her.

He had striven all in his power to win happiness for her, and when the man who had professed to love her deserted and left her an object for pity, and perhaps ridicule, he came and offered her his honest, true love.

Luiduilte Dene was not like some women, who would have sunk under the bitterness of the blow she had received. Nothing could ever kill her love; but a strong armour of pride and passionate, sorrowful anguish kept guard over it, and she told herself that it would be as well to return to England an affianced, if not wedded, bride.

Why should she not reward Colonel Dalziel's love? She could never again care for one man more than for another, and he did not expect her to give him love for love, and—

Yes, this thought had greater influence than all. Liance would see that he had not broken her heart, that life still had joys for her. He would not have the power, then, to tell himself that she sorrowed for him!

"I never thought of this, Colonel," she said, at last, looking up into his face. "But if you can be content after—"

"Mine!"

He did not give her time to conclude, but bent over her, pressing his lips to her cold brow, and murmuring incoherent words of love and thanks.

His passion and fervour startled the girl into a remembrance of what she had done; but she had put her hand to the plough, and would go through with it now. After all, life was not so very long, and then there would come eternal peace!

She rose with the calm on her face that this thought brought, and asked him to lead her back to the hall-room.

François Rouget was the first person they encountered, and a sickening dread took possession of his soul when he saw the look of triumphant joy on the Colonel's usually stern face, the fierce delight in the keen grey eyes. Though he was virtually alone with Luiduilte several times after that he dared not speak, for of late there had sprung up a coolness between the friends, though François did not know why.

Luiduilte had first been vexed when he had spoken again of Lord Vermont's attentions and peculiar behaviour in not asking her hand openly; but now there was a proud fear that he would discover how right he had been, and she kept aloof as much as possible. All this of course, was unknown to the young Count, but he felt the influence of it, and dared not speak.

That night, when Luiduilte and her aunt arrived home, as they stood in the room where Liance had whispered his love, Luiduilte told of her engagement to Colonel Dalziel. And Mdlle. D'Almaine, looking at the tall, erect figure in old gold velvet and pearls, looking at the cold pallor of the lovely face, and the

burning lustre of the wondrous eyes, felt that this was not her niece's choice, not her heart-choice.

"Why not the Count?" she asked quietly.

"I should grow to hate him. Colonel Dalziel I shall tolerate," was the calm reply. She would not even pretend love to her aunt; but Mdlle. somehow felt that Luiduilte's decision was final, and she sighed deeply. Once she had hoped to see her niece a French Countess; then had come the idea of a more brilliant marriage; now she would be only Mrs. Dalziel; and yet, if it had been for her happiness, she would have been content.

## CHAPTER IX.

DENE HALL was a fine old house, nestling among great trees that had stood round it, proudly defying the wind and storm for many—many centuries. Built of grey-stones, with terraces running north and south, a smooth stretch of grassland facing the West, where stately peacocks strutted, and a broad carriage drive on the southern side, a drive that ended in a magnificent avenue, no wonder Luiduilte's proud heart leaped with pleasure as she drove up to the house, bathed now in deep amber and purple lights thrown by the setting sun. There was that peculiar hush in the air that seems to come over at this time of year in the country, and the grand old trees were attired in their richest garb of crimson, gold, and russet brown.

Colonel Dalziel, seated on the opposite seat in the landau gazed passionately at the lovely face, flushing and paling with emotion. In the distance, standing out from the haze, rose the quaint towers of Lord Vermont's home, and Luiduilte's eyes had grown dim with pain as her aunt pointed it out. To Colonel Dalziel's heart there came a great fear that he might lose his prize yet, after all his cruel scheming—after bartering away his very soul.

"A grand old place!" he remarked, letting his gaze fall on those distant towers, purpled by the sunset, and Luiduilte lifted her head proudly, saying,—

"Yes, and worthy a noble master." Colonel Dalziel heard the scorn in the rich young voice, saw the haughty glow in the dusky eyes, and felt that he was safe. Mdlle. D'Almaine smiled as she observed,—

"Its master is worthy, if all I hear of him be true. He is said to be indefatigable in his endeavours to render his people happy!"

"No doubt, auntie; he was very pleasant to us. I liked him greatly," returned the girl; and then the door was thrown open, and disclosed a long line of servants waiting in the hall to welcome the mistress, who had forbidden any rejoicings on her home-coming. They had wondered a little what kind of girl she would be, and some had hinted that she must be one of the haughty imperious class of women; but when she stepped out of the carriage, and passed up the steps into the large hall, her face lit by one of her rare sweet smiles, while the rich voice spoke some gracious words of greeting, the verdict was unanimous, that their young mistress was truly one of the "old stock." The first days of her return were spent in looking over accounts with the steward, and planning improvements in the cottages belonging to the Dene Estate. Many things were to be done, she found, on going round amongst her people, and during these visits she made herself acquainted with their little grievances in such a manner as completely won all hearts. The home-coming of the heiress was a blessing to her tenants, they all agreed.

Colonel Dalziel, as her affianced husband, entered into all her plans, winning more of her esteem than she had ever expected to bestow. These were halcyon days for him—days remembered with bliss of which was in the after-time like so much solidifying water upon an open wound.

Ah, surely it is not well to work such evil!

(To be continued.)

## A DAY IN SPRING.

No more my heart is sad,  
For all the world is glad;  
Life seems a joyous thing,  
On this fair day of spring.

Again is faith alive,  
My dead desires revive,  
And old hopes bud anew,  
Beneath this sky so blue.

My doubts and fears are stilled,  
My soul with peace is filled,  
And nature's tender voice  
Bids me anew "Rejoice!"

The clear air golden gleams,  
As sunlight through it streams;  
The hills and valleys ring,  
While birds their anthems sing.

The brooklet sparkling shows,  
As calmly on it flows,  
A silver thread between  
The meadows' tender green.

In happy, joyous mood,  
I say that "God is good,"  
Because, in freshness clad,  
The world is gay and glad.

But, when dark clouds appear,  
And all grows dark and drear,  
Shall I again distrust  
And bow me in the dust?

Ah, that I cannot tell!  
"He doeth all things well,"  
And I am slow to learn  
The lesson somewhat stern.

Yet I to-day can raise  
My voice in heart-felt praise;  
For sights and sounds are fair  
On this spring day so rare!

J. L.

## ROY'S INHERITANCE.

### CHAPTER XIX.

"HAVE you heard?" asked the Duchess, excitedly, as she came into the morning-room where Mr. Fred Sinclair had been breakfasting with Lady Alice Hawshaw. "Some horrible tragedy has happened at Mount-falcon!"

"Not to the fairy princess!" exclaimed Fred, in dismay, as he sprang from his seat.

"Not to the poor old man!" from Lady Alice, whose sympathy was ready for anyone but the girl whom she thought was a sneak.

"Nobody knows exactly!" lowering her voice, mysteriously. "Some say it was burglars, others that Philip Falconer was mixed up in it, but that's too horrible."

"Might I be allowed to have the dog-cart?" put in Sinclair, eagerly. "I must go over there at once."

"You must do nothing of the kind! You would ruin everything. Didn't I tell you that Philip Falconer was there?"

"All the more necessary for me to be on the spot," looking as if he were on the point of starting.

"Sit down and listen to me."

"For five minutes, and then I must go off. Might I go so far as to ring the bell?"

"No, we have no orders to give, and I don't want to be interrupted."

"Must I drag myself there, all those miles on foot?" with his eyebrows halfway up his forehead. "I shall faint on the doorstep, and the princess will have to take me in, and nurse me!"

"I think she has taken you in already!" laughed Lady Alice. "But now," turning to



her sister, "pray don't attend to Mr. Sinclair any more. I want to hear if anybody is dead or dying!"

"The old man's very bad," said the Duchess, solemnly, "and I consider it heartless to laugh. A shot in the chest is no joke at seventy or eighty!"

"A shot!" the others exclaimed simultaneously, with an equal amount of dismay. "Yes, a shot. It is said to be an accident; but I know somebody who calls it by an uglier name," with a significant glance.

"Where's the somebody?" cried Fred. "Introduce me at once! I'll worm the truth out of him before you're an hour older."

"This is all I know," said the Duchess, taking no notice of his interruption. "At about one o'clock there was a noise in the house, and your friend," nodding to Fred, "and Philip Falconer were discovered kneeling by the side of Lord Mountfalcon's body, which looked just like a corpse!"

"How extraordinary! But where was the man who waits on him?"

"That's the odd thing, Alice. He was alone with these two in an upper part of the house."

"My theory is this," said Fred, gloomily. "Those two were having a regular spoon, and Mr. Falconer shot his father, taking him for an odiously inconvenient burglar. It makes me sick to think of that adorable little thing spooning with anyone but me!"

"Do you think he will die?" asked Lady Alice in an awestruck tone.

"If it were anyone else I should think he certainly would; but nothing kills a miser, when his money would do so much good to somebody who can scarcely live without it."

"Ah! poor Roy, if he had been there this would never have happened. I wonder if he will hear of it?"

"I shall send for him," said the Duchess, promptly. "There's not a doubt that he ought to be on the spot."

"Oh, hang it all!" exclaimed Fred, "between the two how is a fellow to get a chance?"

"He won't put his foot inside Mountfalcon, so you needn't be afraid."

"But I am afraid! Oh, dear Duchess! Let me have a horse, and I'll ride over this afternoon and see if I can't catch a glimpse of her. She would be more likely to come out then than in the morning, and just see what a lot I could tell you when I came back!"

Perhaps on account of this artful suggestion the Duchess at last consented, but gave him express orders to do nothing compromising, and on no account to lose the key of the postern, as she had procured it with great difficulty.

"I don't think you are wise to trust that mad boy!" and Lady Alice shook her pretty head, as soon as he had left the room. "He will be getting himself into some awful scrape, and you too."

"I don't think so. He's wide-awake, and I must know."

Lady Alice looked at her sister curiously, and wondered why she took such a vivid interest in Mountfalcon, and everything to do with it.

The Duchess had a craving to be alone, and went away to her boudoir, where she paced up and down, with pale lips, tightly pressed together, and drawn brows.

Oh! if Lord Mountfalcon were going to die. Why didn't he die before, when happiness was still possible, and hope not dead? If Roy had come to her with Mountfalcon at his back, how joyfully she would have flown to his arms!

A cursed prudence had taken possession of her then for the only time in her life. She thought of ways and means, of poverty, with all its mean and shabby concomitants—poor makehiffs in the way of dress, uneatable dinners in cheap lodgings, no society but the wives of her husband's brother officers—and came to the conclusion that she could not face it; and now she had everything she

wanted, and she was the most miserable woman in Blankshire.

Oh! how willingly she would give up all that she had prized too dearly if she could only be Marion Hawkshaw once again, with Roy for her devoted lover!

"Roy! Roy! Roy!" she gasped, with hands pressed tightly against her chest, as if she hoped that her voice could reach him, though she knew him to be miles away.

Would this longing never die? Would this thirst for a look or a word never be quenched? Must she go on for ever till the day of her death thinking of what might have been, regretting what could never be undone? No, no, no! Her health was splendid. She might live fifty years longer, and fifty years of misery would be certain to turn her brain.

She must cure herself, it was absolutely necessary, but how?

She went and stood by her husband's sofa, but there seemed to be no cure for her diseased mind in the contemplation of his helpless figure.

A little while ago that very helplessness had touched her deeply, but now her heart felt like a stone.

The Duke was dozing, but sleep could lend no beauty to his rugged features. His wife shuddered, for his ugliness had never struck her so forcibly before. She mentally compared him with Roy Falconer—one of the handsomest men in the cavalry—and one evil thought after another glided like a poisonous adder into her brain.

Any other man would have died after that terrible accident on the ice. Could this half inanimate existence be called life? He was no good now to himself or to anyone else. Surely there ought to be a law to allow helpless creatures to be put quietly out of the way.

It might be done quite painlessly. She had heard of people passing away into another world because of having slept in an ill-ventilated room, where the fire was made of charcoal. She had heard of others dying of some subtle poison, without an ache or a pang—a poison which left no trace behind, but yet stole into the springs of life and dried them up.

Would not that poor, helpless log be far better off in the land of shadows than here, tied to a sofa, playing dominoes like a brainless child, his intellect dead, his strength gone, no joy to himself, a sorrow or a disgust to everyone else?

She stood there like a Medusa, her eyes fixed on the unconscious face with a fierce, unholy light under their dark lashes.

Her innermost soul revolted at the thought of being tied to a man who was nothing but a lump of flesh and bone, who had sunk to the level of the brutes!

She, the beauty of Mayfair—the belle of the New Club balls, the cynosure of all eyes in the Row, the fêted, courted, Marion Hawkshaw—was she to be condemned for ever by a marriage that was no marriage in anything but name? How could she love, honour, and obey a creature who could neither excite affection nor respect, nor give a single order? Why was her fate to be harder than that of any other married woman in the world?

"Away with you, you hate me, you want to kill me!" cried her husband, waking from his sleep, and he tried to push her from him with his poor, powerless hands.

She stepped back with a shudder. Why did he think that she wanted to kill him? Had he read the thought in her mind? Had he guessed by a subtle instinct that she had long to be delivered from the burden of his wrecked life?

Martin hurried in from the adjoining room at the sound of his master's voice, and the Duchess slunk away like a guilty criminal from the eye of a detective.

The poor Duke of Honiton kept jabbering some offensive epithets, whilst he pointed his finger in scorn at his wife's receding figure. It was curious that ever since his illness he had turned against his wife, calling her by the vilest names whenever she came near him.

He seemed to have a perverse and rooted idea that she was treating him shamefully now that he could no longer defend himself.

Martin had done his best to reason him out of it, but his master was as much beyond the reach of reason as a baby in arms was behind it. Persuasion had no effect on him, and the only way to stop his tongue and soothe his excitement was to attract his attention to some other subject. This Martin attempted to do, but at first without success. It was just as if some slanderous tale had been breathed into the Duke's ears during his sleep, for he spoke with conviction as well as with the bitterest anger.

"She has deceived me!—turn her out!—she's not fit to live under this roof! Wretched woman, go and hide your face!"

Lady Alice was just going in to pay her morning visit to her brother-in-law when the Duchess, who was still standing outside the door, stopped her.

"Listen!" she said, in a hoarse whisper. "Isn't that a delightful sort of husband to be blessed with? Could he say worse of me if I were the vilest creature on earth? Isn't it enough to tempt a woman to break out?"

"It's very hard to bear," taking hold of her sister's hand and pressing it tight.

"Hard! It's impossible," with a quick-drawn breath. "I ought to be able to get a divorce from a husband who is no more good to me than a doll."

"Oh, don't say that!" and Lady Alice looked pained. "Divorce is never right. But don't be in despair, darling. It won't go on much longer, and if it does, ask Heaven to help you to bear it."

"Oh, it's easy to talk!" and the Duchess wrenched away her hand impatiently. "You've got the whole world before you. You can choose which road you like, but mine is blocked for ever."

She turned away, and walking quickly down the corridor, disappeared in the direction of her own suite of rooms.

The powers of good and evil were struggling that day for the possession of her storm-tossed soul. She asked herself fiercely why she should be better than anyone else? She did not mean to do anything wrong, so where was the harm of asking Roy Falconer down, what she might look upon his handsome face, and hear his deep-toned voice? She would not utter a word that the whole world might not hear; she would act as if her husband were by her side with all his powers of mind as keen as ever; but she had a longing to see the face of an old friend, and nothing else would satisfy her.

She was too weak to stand against this temptation—when he was far away from sight or hearing; but she was perfectly certain she could stand firm, with the proper dignity of a wife, in spite of old association tugging at her heart-strings, and the thought of sweet bygone hours! So she listened to the wiles of the Tempter, and telling herself that she was of a stronger mould than most of her sex, wrote the letter which was a proof of her womanly weakness.

"No, nothing shall ever induce me to stay twenty-four hours at the Castle!" exclaimed Roy, as the letter slipped from his fingers on to the hearthrug. "I'll go down to the Claverings and run over there, perhaps just to find out what I can about my grandfather. But," and he shook his well-shaped head with the determination of a Wellington, and something like a vow that he would never be the Duchess's friend.

## CHAPTER XX.

PHILIP FALCONER'S brain was actively engaged in developing plans for the future. He had not slept a wink, his thoughts being divided between the golden hoard in the empty bed-room on the same floor as himself, and the father who had so nearly died by his hand.

He knew that he had thrown away his last chance of reconciliation with the father, therefore he must seek for a fortune in any other place than his will.

He had introduced Nora Macdonald into the house, he had constituted himself her only friend, whether she accepted him as such or not, and it seemed to him the most natural thing that she should pass on to him all that she acquired through his instrumentality.

This could be only done in one way. It was folly to think that she would give her wealth to anyone but the man whom she had chosen for her husband.

Her affections must therefore be diverted from Roy, to Philip Falconer, and it did not strike him that this was too hard a thing for him to accomplish.

Many women had loved him; why should this girl be more difficult to please than the rest?

He reasoned like a man of the world, knowing very little of hearts as pure and loyal as Nora Macdonald's. With her, to love once was to love for ever, and whether she died in the heyday of youth or the twilight of old age, she was sure to carry that love with her to her grave.

"You can't conceive how many enemies I have in the world," he said, as he was folding up a cigarette after they had breakfasted together in the library. "Anyone else but you would have misjudged my motive last night. My father has a very dangerous habit of walking in his sleep, and when I am here, I always sit up till the small hours to see that he doesn't come to grief."

"But, surely, that is Venables' business!" and Nora looked up into his face with grave eyes.

"Venables does not undertake to watch both night and day. It would require a man of iron."

"I could scarcely believe my own eyes when I saw Lord Mountfalcon pass my door. It seemed so strange that he could walk upstairs when he was supposed to be ill in bed!"

Philip frowned.

"Why weren't you in bed yourself?"

"It was such a luxury to have a fire once again that I sat up to enjoy it," with a smile.

"I wish to heavens I had never ordered it."

"But why, Mr. Falconer? I thought you found me rather useful," she said, in surprise. "I shall always be associated in your mind with that horrid night!"

"What does that matter? A son's place is by his father's side in danger. I forgot, though!" with reddening cheeks, "there was no danger till you brought the pistol!"

"What do you mean?" he said, fiercely, his face growing deathly white.

"I mean that there was no pistol in Lord Mountfalcon's hand," she said, bravely, though her heart beat fast.

"Might I ask, Miss Macdonald, what you are meaning to insinuate by that remark?" he asked, slowly, a sneer upon his livid lips; but his cold, grey eyes fixed on the family portrait beyond her young head.

"Nothing—nothing at all!" hastily.

"It was not a sensible remark—for there are other things besides hands—a pocket, for instance, which contained the key of a door as well as that of an iron chest; besides the revolver! Answer me, and tell me the truth?" making an effort, and raising his eyes to the girl's resolute face, "Do you accuse me of wishing to murder my father?"

"No, no!" stepping back in horror. "No one but a fiend would do that."

"Then, bad as I am, I'm not exactly a fiend? I don't care what another soul on earth thinks of me; but that you should misjudge me is more than I can bear!" his voice softened to its most pathetic key.

"But I don't, indeed—indeed, I don't!" filled with remorse for even her passing thoughts.

"What should I gain by it?" he went on,

with an air of injured innocence. "I know for a certainty that I'm struck out of my father's will, therefore his death would rob me of my last hope. I don't complain of his harshness. I have my enemies, and he believes what they say. It is a fearful shame; but I say nothing."

"But he never sees anyone," she began eagerly.

"He did not always live like this. Do you know what drove him to it? Disappointment in his grandson."

Nora started, and the indignant blood rushed to her cheeks. "I don't believe one word of it!"

"You are too polite," with a mock bow. "I ought to have taken more care when I was talking to Roy's self-elected champion."

"I don't choose to listen when people are being abused behind their backs!" she said as loftily as she could, in spite of a vivid blush.

"The facts speak for themselves. Roy was his grandfather's Benjamin once; now he has changed positions with Ishmael. Whose fault is that?"

"Not his own—I'm as sure as I can be."

"All right; be sure, poor little thing! The disillusion will come soon enough," and with a smile that angered her as much as if he had doubled his fist and struck her, he stepped out of the window to enjoy his cigarette.

His grandfather's Benjamin once! How touching it sounded! She could fancy Captain Falconer as a light-hearted, happy boy, bringing life and happiness to the old weird house, and scattering its gloom and darkness with shouts of boyish laughter.

If Philip Falconer had caused him to be sent away, and banished for ever from his own home, he certainly had gained nothing by his baseness; for he was in no better favour than his nephew.

She puzzled over these things, as she sat by the old Viscount's bedside. He seemed to be pleased to have her with him; but he scarcely spoke a word, and when she read out *The Times* in her soft, clear voice, he promptly fell into a doze.

Philip did not come near him, and as he had cautioned her not to mention his name, she felt sure that he was staying on against his father's wishes.

Still it was no affair of hers, and it seemed only right and proper that his son should be on the spot when Lord Mountfalcon was so ill. No doctor was sent for, although the extraction of the bullet by unskilful hands would have been likely to cause the patient's death. Why was it that no one, not even a physician or surgeon, was allowed to enter that mysterious house?

Falconer was grave and preoccupied, but he laid himself out to please Nora Macdonald. Noticing that she looked pale at luncheon, he delighted her by propping to take her for a ride.

"Griselda would carry you beautifully, and it would do you all the good in the world!"

He pook-pooked all her objections, and she flew upstairs like a bird. In her eagerness for the exercise she liked best, all her tragic ideas had passed away, and she was almost prepared to swear that Mr. Philip Falconer was a good-natured man, who would not hurt a fly.

When she came down in her neat dark blue habit, which fitted her rounded figure to perfection, he did not say much, but his eyes absolutely devoured her. The mere sight of her sweet eager face, with the flush of excitement on her delicate cheeks, made the blood stir in his veins.

He helped her on to the pretty bay mare, and arranged her habit with a lingering touch. Then he mounted his own black horse, and they rode off across the wide stretch of grass at a gentle canter, which quickened presently into a hand gallop, the bay mare being fresh, and Nora not quite capable of holding her in. How the girl enjoyed it in every fibre of her being!

Philip was delighted, for he knew that he had gained ground enormously since the beginning of the day; and as his own admiration increased, he grew intoxicated with the thought of his approaching success.

It would be something to boast of, if he could tame the child's proud spirit, and claim all her sweetness and beauty for his own. For that she was beautiful, he frankly acknowledged now—as beautiful as Lady Marion Hawkeham was when she turned from the uncle so readily as soon as the nephew appeared in the doorway.

He could not forget Nora as she appeared to him like an angel of light, coming to his help in the middle of the night, her glorious hair hanging in heavy golden masses over her shoulders, her large eyes wide open with horror and wonder; and yet how helpful and brave she was in spite of her fear!

She had conquered him then completely, and he resolved to win her—not only because she would bring the much needed grief to his mill, but because he felt maddened by the charm of her beauty.

Meanwhile, Mr. Fred Sinclair had started on his self-chosen mission.

His volatile young heart was beating fast with hope and expectation as he tied his horse to the thorn-tree, pulled the key, which the Duchess had obtained through bribery and corruption, out of his pocket, opened the postern gate, and stood once more, under the beech trees of Mountfalcon.

How beautiful the park looked in the bright sunshine! The soft brown of the withered bracken, the bright green of the rich grass, the deer browsing quietly on the young roots, and lifting antlered heads at the sound of approaching hoofs!

Fred Sinclair hurried to an opening in the trees, for he heard them, too; and presently he saw Nora riding on Griselda, with a man whom he recognised intuitively, and hated on the spot, as the son of the house.

He was filled in a moment with rabid jealousy, and plunged on through the under-wood, reckless of consequences, if only he could catch sight, once again, of the fairy princess.

By making great haste, he thought, he could meet them once again, for they were, making as wide a round as they could, and he was bent on cutting a corner.

He went on, without once looking over his shoulder, entirely engrossed in the fervent desire to catch another glimpse of the face that haunted his dreams; and, forgetting that at any moment, he was liable to being taken up for trespassing. He took no precautions, but dashed through the tea of bracken boldly as if he had been one of Lord Mountfalcon's most favoured guests, while a man in a suit of brown velvet, with leather gaiters, watched him with amazement.

His first thought was that the stranger was a poacher, but when he saw that he had nothing in his hand but a stick or a riding crop, he came to the conclusion that he was a lunatic, and gave chase at once, crashing through the ferns with the weight of a ballock.

Fred Sinclair heard the noise behind him, but did not stop until a shrill voice called out—

"Halloa, you there! I'll trouble you to stop. You've no business in them coverts!"

Fred felt a pang of dismay, but turned round with a seemingly undaunted front.

"At last I've found a human being in this deserted place!" he said, as coolly as he could, considering that his breath was rather exhausted by his run. "The Countess of Clavering's compliments, and how is Lord Mountfalcon?"

The gamekeeper, Robert Davis, stood still and rubbed his chin.

"It wasn't after his lordship's death you were pounding along at that pace. There's the cause; why the d— I didn't you go up to the front door if you were so mighty anxious?"



Fred was not to be nonplussed like any ordinary mortal.

"If you wish to know," he said, haughtily, "I saw Mr. Falconer in the distance, and I wished to catch him up."

"That sounds fair enough," said Davis, slowly. "Just you come along with me, and I'll take you to Mr. Philip."

"Not at all," hastily. "You can tell me as well as anyone how Lord Mountfalcon is."

Davis shook his head.

"You are trespassing on his lordship's ground, and it's my duty to take you up to the house."

"My good fellow, you can't take me, unless I choose to go!" drawing up his slight figure and looking down his delicate Greek nose at the keeper's burly form. "Your master does not wish for any visitors, so I would not interrupt him for the world!"

"Might I ask how you happened to gain in?" looking suspicious.

"I got in, and I mean to get out. How is your master?"

"My master is doing pretty well—least ways, as well as a gentleman of his age can manage with a bullet in his chest. But you, sir—"

"Never mind me. I'm in perfect health. How did the bullet get into the poor old gentleman?"

"That's more than I can say. Mr. Philip was with him, and the pistol was fired; but I don't rightly know who fired it, or who brought it there. It's a queer story, and I can't make out the rights of it. But I must trouble you to move off."

"I'm going. Is the old fellow going to recover?"

"The old fellow, indeed! I like your impudence. You be off! You be up to no good here, and it's my duty to see you off the premises."

"I needn't trouble you. Look here, old man! I owe you something for giving you such a run," holding out a sovereign. "Is Mr. Falconer likely to stay here long?"

"Thank ye, sir," pocketing it quickly. "I'm sure I don't know; nobody knows when he goes, or when he comes. He's a sharp un, he is, and it don't require three pair of eyes to see what he's up to this afternoon."

"Nonsense! He's old enough to be her father," the blood rushing to his good-looking face.

Davis's eyes twinkled.

"Lis, sir, you took my meaning as sharp as a ferret. Seems as how you might be playing the same game yourself?"

Fred Sinclair cursed his own stupidity, but did not lose his presence of mind.

"And if I were—could I count on your assistance?"

"It's nothing against his lordship?" doubtfully.

"Nothing on earth to do with him."

"Nor against the Captain?"

"If I succeed, Captain Falconer will owe me a debt of gratitude," he said, confidently, relying more than was wise upon what the Duchess had told him.

"Then I'm your man," enthusiastically. "There's not one of us but would do all we know of for the Captain."

"That's all right. Now, look here, I must speak to Miss Macdonald as soon as possible; but Mr. Falconer must not know anything of it. Tie a wisp of straw whenever he's hanging about on the outside handle of the postern gate, and keep your eyes open for me, when I'm here."

Davis promised that he would, and chuckled to himself with delight at the idea of defeating Mr. Philip, who was no favourite with any of the dependants. He asked again how Fred had managed to get in, but he shook his head, and turned it off with a laugh saying, "Where there was a will there was also a way."

For a long time Sinclair hung about, but was only rewarded by a sight of Nora in the distance, dismounting at the front door. He blew her a kiss, which the wind refused to

take her, and went back disconsolately to the Castle, feeling much like a hungry child who has been staring at cakes through the glass of a confectioner's window—a very unsatisfactory pastime.

## CHAPTER XXI.

For a whole week Philip Falconer stayed on at Mountfalcon, steadily working his way in Nora's favour, till her suspicions were lulled to rest on one side, and she was ashamed to remember all the evil she had believed of him. On Easter Sunday they drove together in the old-fashioned barouche, with its pair of fat, supernumerated horses, to a small church at some distance, where Falconer calculated that the Duchess would probably perform her devotions.

For reasons of his own he was very anxious to be seen alone with Nora Macdonald, though he was equally anxious to keep her from speaking to any of her friends. He did not think it was likely that any of them would come to that out-of-the-way little church; and it was with a feeling of positive dismay that he saw the party from the Castle file up the aisle in the middle of the Psalms, the Duchess, gorgeous in seal skin and sable, leading the way, followed by her sister and Fred Sinclair, whom he did not know. Roy Falconer, looking handsome and haughty as ever, bringing up the rear. Nora's heart nearly leapt out of her bosom, and her cheeks went deathly pale, as she kept her eyes glued to the prayer-book which she was holding unconsciously upside down.

Oh! how fervently she wished Philip at the furthest end of the world; for he sat close into her pocket, looked over the same hymn-book, which distracted her thoughts entirely from the beautiful Easter hymn, and paid her every officious attention he could think of.

He went so far as to squeeze a half-crown into her hand when she was feeling for her purse; but that she would not stand, and she jerked her fingers away with such energy that the coin rolled with a loud noise on to the tessellated pavement. Fred Sinclair looked round with a broad grin. Roy Falconer with a stern stare, and Nora with crimson cheeks felt inclined to creep under the seat.

When the service was over the Castle party streamed out, as if in a hurry; but, when Nora followed, they were still blocking up the path in the churchyard. Philip went forward to speak to the Duchess, Nora hung back, and was pounced on by Fred. Roy raised his hat as if to a comparative stranger, and stood aloof talking to Lady Alice.

"This is the most delightful and exquisite surprise!" said Sinclair, with a most impressive squeeze of the small hand which was intrusted to him for half a minute. "At least I've got the chance I've been longing for! Why do you never come to the White Ash? Didn't you see my appeal in the agony column? Didn't you see me behind the thorn when you dashed past with that insufferable cat? Do you know that I've been there day after day?"

"No; of course I didn't. But why are you with the Duchess? You are not a friend of hers, are you?" looking up at him with anxious eyes, which he thought were the loveliest that he had ever seen.

He remembered that, for some reason that he knew nothing about, he was on no account to mention that he came from the Castle.

"A friend? That's a strong term. You see, her place is nearer to Mountfalcon than the Chase; and we must make use of people sometimes, you know," he answered, vaguely.

Oh! if he would only take himself off! Was Roy never going to speak to her? It was too ignominious to stand there as if she was waiting for him! too dreadful to be supposed to be engrossed with this stranger!

"There's such a curious little tomb there I

want to look at," she said suddenly; and, suiting the action to the word, she hurried across the grass to an old, lichen-covered grave with an indecipherable inscription.

Fred was delighted. He thought it a transparent excuse for a more secluded *à-tête*, and his confidence grew apace.

He said one audacious thing after another, and was never rebuked, for Nora scarcely heard a word he said as she watched the group by the church door in an agony of mind.

"Mr. Falconer has told the truth," she thought, with extreme bitterness. "That must be Lady Alice, and he can't tear himself away from her, even to speak to an old friend. I wish I had never seen him!"

The next moment a tall figure came striding across the graves. A deep voice said,—

"Just allow me a few words with Miss Macdonald;" and, as Fred stepped aside with a laugh and a bow, she leant against the old grey tombstone for support, as a sudden weakness seemed to have attacked her knees as well as her heart.

Roy looked at the sweet, young face, the tears resting on the long, silken lashes, the tremble about the pretty lips, and involuntarily his eyes softened.

"Will you be kind enough tell me the truth about my grandfather?" he asked, anxiously. "I've heard such a cock-and-bull story that I don't know what to believe. Is it true that he has been shot in the chest?"

She could not raise her eyes to his as he stood bareheaded in the sun before her, with all the deference of a perfect gentleman, but with an icy coldness which seemed to stab her heart with a frozen knife.

Was this the meeting she had longed for, as the weary for rest?

"Yes; quite true," she said, softly. "He had been ill all day, but in the middle of the night he got up. You know he keeps a heap of money in one of the rooms on the first-floor?"

"Who? my grandfather? Are you sure? Do you know it for a fact?" in intense surprise.

"Yes; Mr. Falconer told me."

"Ah! he knew of it, I'd bet anything."

"Yes; and he kindly sat up all night, because he knew that Lord Mountfalcon walked in his sleep, and he thought he might hurt himself."

"I suppose the money had nothing to do with it?" in a sarcastic tone.

As he said it, all Nora's first suspicions came back upon her with a rush; but she went on as if he had not spoken, feeling that it would be disloyal to say anything against Philip after his past kindness.

"Lord Mountfalcon took him for a burglar, and was going to shoot him; but Mr. Falconer caught it from his hand, and the revolver went off."

"My uncle was alone with my grandfather in the room with the money when this happened?" he said, slowly. "Did anyone hear the pistol shot?"

"Yes; I did, and rushed out, screaming 'Murder!'"

"You went to that room?"

"Yes. It was pitch-dark, and I was so frightened!" shuddering.

"It was awfully plucky!" with a sudden gleam in his eyes. "What would have happened if you hadn't gone?"

She shrugged her graceful shoulders.

"Venables would have come; I wasn't much good."

He did not answer, but seemed lost in thought.

Fred Sinclair gave an impatient cough, to which nobody paid the smallest attention.

Presently Roy asked if the old man were in danger.

"No. They wouldn't send for a doctor; but Venables managed everything."

"My uncle has been there ever since?" with a frown.

"Yes; he said he was so anxious, he could not go away."



["BULLOCK, YOU THERE! I'LL TROUBLE YOU TO STOP. YOU'VE NO BUSINESS IN THEM COVERS!"]

Roy came a step nearer.

"Go home, child! go home at once! Mount-falcon is no place for you!" he said, in a low but very earnest voice.

She shook her head with a smile.

"You must," he said imperatively. "Go before it is too late, before—your youth is spoilt."

"In a year—only part of a year more!" her colour coming and going.

His face grew stern, as he bent his head, and said, almost in a whisper,—

"Be warned in time; there are worse ills than poverty."

"I'm afraid of nothing, if I only succeed!" a joyous light in her eyes. "And won't you be glad, too?" venturing one eager glance up into his handsome face, as she felt an intense craving for one word of encouragement.

"Glad!" he cried in amazement. "What do you think I'm made of? I could love you, child, with little bare feet, and a ragged frock, but as heiress to Mountfalcon I should hate you!"

She stepped back as if he had dealt her a blow.

"Captain Falconer!" Her lips trembled. She could say no more.

"And that, not because of the paltry money," he went on hotly, "but because you would have proved yourself a fit bride for my uncle. I wish you both joy!"

He was gone, and Nora stood still as the stone monuments about her, a greater stillness in her heart, as if something had died there.

She had sacrificed everything for Roy Falconer. She had torn herself from her only home. She had given up her freedom. She had offended all her friends, she had ruined the brightness of her youth—all for him, and this was her reward!

The Duchess's landau drove off; the spirited horses jingling their harness, and making as much noise as they could with their hoofs

on the hard road, Fred Sinclair waving his hat with fervent enthusiasm, Roy looking straight before him, with as stern a face as if he were in front of the enemy's guns.

"I'm surprised at you, Roy," said the Duchess, pettishly, as she nevertheless threw him a large share of the sable rug. "That girl has proved herself perfectly despicable, and is going to marry your bitterest enemy!"

"Not if I can help it!"

A look of alarm came into Marion's proud eyes.

"You ought to have nothing to do with her. She is cheating you out of your birthright."

"I threw it away like Esau; somebody must pick it up," he said, with a frown.

"Miss Macdonald has the sweetest face I ever saw," said Lady Alice, gently. "If I were a man, I would save her from that horrid Mr. Falconer!"

"My hands are tied," said Roy gloomily.

"But mine are not," cried Fred, joyously.

"What will you bet that I don't cut him out?"

Roy flashed him a withering glance that ought to have settled his impudence for ever.

"I don't bet about women!"

Fred flushed, but stood to his guns.

"Oh, hang it, you know, the bet was about myself. Won't anyone back me against a dried-up elderly, sour faced cad, who is old enough to be her father?" looking entreatingly from one to the other.

"I will, Fred. I think you are sure to win," said the Duchess, encouragingly. "That is to say, if you can get into Bluebeard's Tower," recollecting the need for secrecy. "You have my heartiest wishes for your success."

"Might I ask why?" said Roy, looking straight into her face with stern eyes. How he hated this foolish stuck-up boy, who seemed to think that he had nothing to do but to ask and to have!

The pale, proud face of the Duchess of Yorkshire grew crimson, as she realised what

her motive was, and felt she must die rather than confess it. Her eyes sank beneath his steady gaze. She bit her lip till she broke the skin. Her bosom heaved tumultuously, but without a word she leant back against the cushions, and drew a deep breath of endless longing, as she pressed her wedding-ring in a convulsive clasp.

Oh, for freedom—freedom from the most hateful—the most useless tie—on earth!

As if in answer to her wild thoughts the coachman pulled up his horses, as a mounted messenger dashed up to the side of the carriage.

"Please, your Grace," said the messenger, touching his cap, "the Duke has had a fit, and I'm on my way to fetch the doctor."

"Then go on, and don't stop. Gregory," to the coachman, "drive as fast as you can."

"Don't be frightened, dear," whispered Lady Alice, "a fit might do poor Honiton good."

"It couldn't do him harm, could it?" with a bitter smile. "He couldn't be worse than he is."

"Yes," said Roy, very quietly. "Your husband is so helpless and harmless. If he were violent, how terrible it would be for you!"

"Not worse," in a very low voice. "He might kill me then, and what have I to live for?" a cry which only Heaven could hear going up from her closed lips.

(To be continued.)

Sorrow is not an accident, occurring now and then. It is the roof which is woven into the warp of life, and he who has not discerned the divine sacredness of sorrow, and the profound meaning which is concealed in pain, has yet to learn what life is. The cross, manifested as the necessity of the highest life, alone interprets it.





[SHE UTTERED BUT ONE WORD, HURLED AT HIM WITH ALL THE VENEMENCE OF HER OUTRAGED SPIRIT—"COWARD!"]

NOVELLETTE.]

## TEMPEST TOSSED.

—o—

### CHAPTER I.

"A THOUSAND to one on the Duke!" "He romps in an easy winner!" "Well done, Cherry-and-White!" "Skylark is nowhere!" "Hurrah!"

Such were the shouts that greeted the cluster of horses and jockeys as they dashed round Tattenham Corner on this bright, sunny afternoon.

Another Derby had been won—and lost.

The bookmakers were jubilant; the Duke had started at twenty to one, and even at that price had secured but few friends.

Skylark had started a hot favourite, but had only been able, although ridden by the first jockey of the day, to obtain third place.

As the numbers were hoisted up, a hoarse murrain, which presently broke into a tremendous roar, sounded over the expansive downs.

Even those who had lost small stakes joined in the cheering and joyful shouts, for the Marquis of Croxteth, the owner of the Duke, was the most popular patron of the turf; and few there were who begrudged him the honour of winning the coveted blue ribbon.

On the Grand Stand, and in Tattersall's enclosure, however, there were many gloomy faces, for Skylark had been looked upon as a "moral certainty," and the gilded youth of England had plunged heavily.

Near the rails stood a tall, handsome-looking man of about thirty-five, who viciously gnawed at the ends of his long, tawny moustache.

"Hullo, Bertie! where have you been hiding all this time? Not heavily hit over the Duke, eh? You look as pleasant as a rainy day in October!"

The speaker, a delicate looking man of some twenty-five years, was the Honourable George Herrington, seventh Earl of Basingstoke, whose general appearance testified to the racy life he had led ever since he left Eton.

The one addressed as Bertie turned hastily round.

"I didn't know you were coming, Basingstoke," he said, with a careless drawl. "You said yesterday you shouldn't."

"Did I? 'Pon my soul, I forget! Fact is, though, Flora made me. 'Pon my honour, I didn't want to come. This noise and crush and bustle isn't my form just at present."

"Egad, though, I'm jolly glad I did come, though. It was one of the finest races I ever saw run; and I'm jolly glad Croxteth has won—though it will cost me a monkey. You backed Skylark, too; I hope you hedged, old man?"

"I never hedge; you know that!" replied the Honourable Bertie Wilmot, savagely. "I shall have to stand the racket."

"Wilmot's hard hit," said the young Earl to himself.

Then he laid his hand kindly on the other's arm.

"Come and have a snack with us, old chap. Plenty of time between this and Monday to brood over your losses. Besides, Lady Flora will never forgive me if I tell her I have seen you and not brought you with me."

Bertie Wilmot gave a slight deprecatory shrug of his broad shoulders, and then allowed the Earl to link his arm within his own, and lead him towards the drag.

Flora Herrington saw them coming, and as she recognised the stalwart figure of Wilmot a deep flush suffused her peach-like cheek.

"Well, I declare! Basingstoke is bringing Captain Wilmot of the Blues. I am so glad! There will be someone to talk to now. You have never met Captain Wilmot, Miss Chester?" she said, patronisingly, turning to her

companion, a fair, gentle-looking girl of about twenty.

"No, Lady Flora, I have met but few people in England," replied Miss Chester. "All my life has been passed in India. I told you when you engaged me that I had lived there until—"

A lump seemed to rise in her throat. Her large, deep-tinted, azure eyes filled with tears, and she could say no more.

"Ah, yes, I think you did tell me that you only came to England after the death of your father, the Colonel," said Lady Flora, indifferently, toying with the flowers attached to her lace parasol.

Beryl Chester heaved a deep sigh, and her thoughts wandered away to the secluded station up in the North-West Provinces, and the gentle-hearted, soldierly man who had been both father and mother to her.

She was aroused from her reverie by the voice of Lady Flora.

"This is Captain Wilmot, Miss Chester!"

She raised her long, dark lashes, upon which the tears hung like pendant jewels, and she involuntarily lowered them before the bold gaze of the Captain.

"What a splendid little creature!" thought he. "Dowdily dressed, but, for all that, a perfect picture!"

"Delighted, I am sure," he said aloud, "to make your acquaintance, Miss Chester. What did you think of the race?"

She looked up quickly, and was relieved to find that he had directed his gaze towards Lady Flora's corse-clad figure.

"I simply thought it magnificent," replied Lady Flora, with animation, her dark eyes sparkling, and her full, red lips quivering with excitement. "I never saw a finer Derby won."

"And what did you think of it, Miss Chester?" he asked, gently.

Beryl blushed.

"I can scarcely say," she replied. "I never

was on a racecourse before, and—and it is all so new and strange that I have scarcely had time to analyse my feelings. It is all very exciting, but I think it seems very cruel to punish such noble animals with whip and spur as they do."

Wilnot smiled cynically. He had heard the same sentiments uttered before by women—women who themselves, when on the Row, wore spurs with sharp rowels projecting a quarter of an inch or more, and who never hesitated in using them mercilessly.

"There are many more cruel actions than horse-racing," he said, giving a quick, almost fierce glance in the direction of Lady Flora.

The latter uttered a short, silvery laugh. "Don't let us begin moralizing on a Derby day," she said, lightly. "I'll thank you for a little of that chicken salad, Basingstoke."

"A pretty little girl, but damned quiet. I wonder who she is? The fair Flora did not seem to like so much notice being taken of her. I must inquire of the Earl; he couldn't keep a secret if he tried."

Thus did the Honourable Bertie commune with himself as he stood before the glass, dressed in fashionable attire for the ball to be given that night by the Earl of Basingstoke at the family mansion in Manchester-square.

This ball was one of the most select of the season, and Lady Flora's gilded pasteboards were looked upon as valued treasures by their recipients.

These balls had been an institution for many years, but on the death of the late earl the present one would gladly have discontinued them had it not been for his cousin, who ruled him in almost everything.

Lady Flora Harrington was of noble family, had a superb figure and carriage, regular features, perfect complexion, but she was poor, and this poverty had, perhaps, something to do with her, violent, passionate temper.

She was of the same age as the Earl, and they had been playmates and companions from their earliest childhood; but although the young nobleman had a brotherly affection and admiration for his clever and beautiful cousin, this had never developed into anything more serious, and Lady Flora knew that at some time or other she would have to resign her position as head of the Basingstoke household to another.

Of course she had received many offers of marriage, but none from those whom she considered desirable or suitable. Her fastidiousness might, perhaps, be pretty well accounted for by the fancy she had taken from the first day of their acquaintance to Captain Bertie Wilnot, who, in point of worldly goods, was almost as poor as herself.

"The fact is, Flora," he had said, after a strong scene in the grounds of Basingstoke House, a couple of years before the commencement of this story, "I am too jolly poor to keep myself, let alone a wife. I could not think of condemning you to a life of poverty and misery. If the governor had acted differently all might have been well; but, as it is, we must suffer as patiently as we can."

Flora Harrington saw through his selfishness at once, but still she could not at a moment's notice conquer her passion, graceless as she knew the object of it to be.

With his five hundred a year and her two they might have lived, if not in luxury, at least in modest comfort; besides, the Earl had great influence with the Government of the day, and some post might be found for the guardsman.

The Honourable Bertie shrugged his shoulders and elevated his eyebrows.

"It wouldn't answer, Flora," he said, coolly. "I am naturally lazy, and should lose the post in a week. We must consent to be only friends."

A violent scene then took place.

All the woman's soul was incensed. She poured forth, with all the vehemence of her passionate and haughty spirit, a torrent of upbraidings and recriminations.

Wilnot waited patiently until she had ex-

hausted herself, and then he calmly held out his hand.

"We shall not be any the less fast friends," Lady Flora," he said, quietly. "In a week's time you will have reasoned the thing out calmly, and then you will acknowledge I was right and you were wrong."

Then they parted, but a week later when they accidentally met in the Row, each wore a pleasant smile, and their friendship was renewed without any allusion to the scene of a week before. Whether they had forgotten it was a secret locked in their own breasts.

So things had gone on until this Derby day; and now, although the Honourable Bertie Wilnot knew he was on the very brink of ruin and disgrace, he calmly looked in the glass to see if his tie was straight, and lightly communed concerning the identity of the petite beauty he had seen in Lord Basingstoke's drag.

In the midst of it his valet entered to tell him his cab was waiting.

"One o'clock, is it? By Jove, how the time flies!" and humming a military ditty, he descended the stairs.

"You are very late. I thought you were not coming."

It was Lady Flora who spoke these few words, in a low, confidential tone.

Very beautiful did she look in her shimmering halitrops satin dress, lavishly trimmed with point d'Alençon lace and seed pearl embroidery, a splendid wreath of white heliotrope adding lustre to the soft marble-like gleam of her white throat and bosom, on which glittered a costly brilliant pendant.

He looked down at her with admiration as he found her tiny gloves in his.

"Should you have cared?" he asked, with a gleam of passion in his dark eyes.

She gave a deep sigh.

"I suppose I should—a little," she said, with a forced laugh; "but better late than never. Let me get you some partners."

"Don't, please, Lady Flora," he said, with mock plaintiveness. "Have a little mercy. I am not a dancing man; and the only one I care for dancing with at all is—yourself."

"I am sorry I cannot consent to monopolize so desirable a partner as the gallant Captain Wilnot," she said.

"At least you will give me two dances for the sake of old times, Flora?" he pleaded, earnestly.

A slight frown contracted her brows, but this quickly passed away.

"I will consent on one condition. You shall dance with Lady Alice Guthrie first."

He gave a grimace.

"It would be perfect torture! She is at least forty, and as bony as a skeleton!"

Lady Flora laughed. Often did her silvery laugh ring out when ill-matured remarks were made concerning her friends.

"You know the conditions," she said, firmly, holding out her programme.

He took it, and scribbled his name in two of the vacant places.

"Even this sacrifice will I make at thy shrine, fair goddess," he said, half in jest, half in earnest.

Flora Harrington hid her blush of gratification behind her fan, and just then her partner came up to claim her for the next waltz.

It was the Marquis of Croxteth, and as Wilnot shook his head a heavy cloud passed over his face.

"The man to whom I owe my ruin!" he muttered, "and yet I am supposed to meet him with a smiling face. A thousand curses on him. I could strike him dead where he stands!"

"Well, Bertie, recovered from the dumps, eh? Come along and have a drop of '82, a wonderful thing for enlivening anyone. I suppose you find this awfully dull?—so do I. But one has to sacrifice themselves occasionally on the altar of the proprieties. What do you think of the chance of Rupert for the Royal Hunt Cup? I have plunged rather heavily. Fact is, old chap, I shall soon be

getting denced short of the ready if something doesn't turn up. I have been down on my luck for nearly two years now."

Wilnot turned slightly pale.

In his selfish, heartless way he was really fond of Flora, and had almost decided upon risking all if the Earl would come down with a few thousands as a dowry for his cousin, and assist him in his present difficulties.

This statement as to the Basingstoke treasury came upon him, therefore, as a surprise, and not a pleasant one either.

"I think I should hedge Basingstoke," he said, seriously. "Rupert is not going very well in the market."

"Hedge! but then, you see, those people are not safe, and they may be rigging it."

"Please yourself," replied Wilnot, coolly. He was unused to having his advice treated lightly.

"Of course," said the Earl, nonchalantly; "but all the same, old fellow, I am much obliged to you, and shall follow your advice."

"By-the-by, Basingstoke," said the Captain, during a pause in the Earl's foolish chatter, "who is that Miss Chester that was on your drag to-day? I don't see her in the ball-room."

The Earl gave a grin.

"Not struck, I hope, Bertie. I told Flora it was scarcely the correct thing, you know, but—er—she would do it; and—er—Miss Chester isn't a bad-looking filly, and she has blood in her, too. High action, by Jove!" he added, colouring as he remembered a recent rebuff he had met at her hands; "but, don't you know, one must draw the lines somewhere, and though you would chaff with a groom in the stable-yard, or lark with a pretty housemaid on the stairs, a fellow would scarcely walk with one in Piccadilly, or introduce the other to his friends in a drawing-room."

"What on earth are you talking about? You surely would not compare Miss Chester to either a groom or a housemaid?"

Again the Earl's face coloured.

"Well—er—no, scarcely that, don't you know, but yet she is a servant after all, though one doesn't pay a license. She is Lady Flora's companion."

Wilnot started back.

"A paid companion?"

"Ya—es," drawled Basingstoke, adjusting his cravat. "Her father was an Indian colonel, but he muddled his affairs, and got his property into Chancery, don't you know. Consequence was when the old 'un pegged out the filly was left to make her own running."

The guardsman shrugged his shoulders. "Pity for her," he said, coolly; "seems rather well-bred."

"A regular high stepper, and knows as much, out of books, you know, as if she was senior wrangler. Lady Flora gets her cheap, though, and she is a rather clever girl."

Nearly all Bertie's interest had fled, and he was almost glad when the dance for which he was engaged to Lady Alice came round that he might have a good excuse for making his escape from the Earl's inanities.

"The penance is over, and now I claim my reward," he said a little later, as he stood before Flora Harrington.

The haughty woman's eyes flashed with triumph.

She knew that Bertie Wilnot was still her captive, and her heart bounded with joy.

She knew that he was not a good man; she knew that he was a selfish one; but yet he was brave and handsome; he was respected by men and adored by women, and she felt a thrill of delight at her triumph over his caution and unimpressible spirit.

The dance was to her one short period of happiness, and she abandoned herself entirely to its enjoyment.

For Bertie, too, the moment was one of joy and pleasure. He knew that this handsome, imperious, wayward creature loved him, and his vanity was gratified.

He had now nothing to love, and by this



marriage he might retrieve his fortune, as well as gain possession of this exquisite piece of workmanship in flesh and blood.

There was nothing noble or pure about his passion. It was of the world worldly; but, nevertheless, it had tangibility and substance, and throwing off his former self-restraint he determined to let it have its way.

When the dance was over he led her through a heavy velvet portiere into the conservatory; and there, in the subdued-coloured light, amidst the tropical plants with which it was crowded, they found a small rustic seat.

Flora Herrington knew instinctively what was about to happen, and the hearing of her bosom proclaimed her agitation.

Very little love was there in her emotion; her principal feeling was one of proud triumph and gratification.

Leading her to the seat, he stood before her, gazing down upon her in unfeigned admiration.

"Flora," he said, with a slight tremor in his voice, "I must speak to you. I never knew that two years ago I misjudged myself. I thought I was stronger than I am."

"I soresly understand you, Captain Wilmot," she said, coldly, although it was with the utmost difficulty she kept her voice steady. "We were to be friends, have we not been so?"

"You have been all that is good and kind, Flora, and I am deeply grateful. You thought my prudence was prompted by selfishness."

"Hullo! here you are. I've been looking for you everywhere, Bertie. Never thought of you sticking yourselves in this damp hole. Sir Charles is looking for you, Flora. He says you promised him this dance. I can't afford to quarrel with Forsyth you know," he added, half apologetically to Wilmot.

The Captain muttered an inaudible reply, and Lady Flora, with a look of anything but affection at her kinsman, swept from the conservatory.

As soon as she had departed the little Earl dragged Bertie forcibly into a corner.

"Is there any truth in it?" he asked, seriously.

"Truth in what?"

"In what those fellows are saying. They say the Duke has broke you, that if you square up on Monday you will not have a silver left."

Wilmot's face grew deathly pale with passion.

"How dare they?" he cried, fiercely. Basingtoke quailed before the stern agency of this strong, passionate man.

"It isn't my fault," he murmured. "I said it was none of their business; but I thought if you were hard up and a few hundreds would be of any use I would find you out and—er—tell you I could let you have it; don't you know?"

Bertie Wilmot staggered back; his whole soul in arms at the coarseness of the Earl.

"It is not quite so bad as that, Basingtoke," with the utmost difficulty suppressing his passion; "but I thank you, nevertheless, and may, perhaps, avail myself of your kindness for a few days, although I believe there will be no necessity."

## CHAPTER II.

LADY FLORA HERRINGTON was ill at ease. She paced feverishly up and down her pretty little nest of a boudoir with quick, short steps, her fingers nervously entwined in each other.

A fortnight had passed, and during that time she had seen nothing of the Honourable Bertie Wilmot, nor could the Earl supply her with any information on the subject.

Then the Monday following the Derby, Wilmot's debt of honour had been duly met by a commissioner; but he himself had been seen neither in the park, on parade, or on the racetrack.

Suddenly she paused in her walk, and rung the bell.

"Tell Miss Chester I want her," she said to the maid who answered the summons.

"Miss Chester, I am going for a drive, and I want you to accompany me. Do not keep me waiting!"

"I shall be ready in five minutes, Lady Flora," replied Beryl, meekly, although a rich carnation suffused her cheeks at the other's domineering tone.

"That is right, I am going in the Park. I want to meet one of Captain Wilmot's brother officers, if I can. He may, perhaps, know what has become of the runaway."

The crimson on the girl's face increased at the name of Wilmot, and she hurriedly left the room.

"A strange creature!" murmured Lady Flora; "blushes like a school-girl when she is spoken to."

The drive was a fruitless one.

No one had heard anything of Bertie. On the day following the Derby he had sent down to the barracks to say he was going away for a few days, but had not said where to.

Her ladyship was in anything but an amiable mood upon her return to Manchester-square, and her French maid, Marie, was almost driven to distraction by her whims and fancies as she was dressing her for dinner.

"You are a careless, useless creature," she cried, fairly bubbling over with wrath. "There, that will do, I cannot stand you any longer. You may go; but send Miss Chester here. I want her to write a couple of letters."

Delighted to escape from her irritable mistress, Marie promptly made her exit.

"Mademoiselle is angered that she has not seen Monsieur the Captain. Hal! le pauvre gentilhomme. If he ever marries her he has my pity!"

With a shrug of her shoulders she made her way to Beryl's room.

Receiving no answer to her summons she entered.

It was empty.

Marie shrugged her shoulders.

"Mademoiselle will again be in a rage. Ha, I am the most unfortunate. I shall return to la belle France. To remain, it is impossible!"

She noticed a small, crumpled note lying on the floor. In an instant her curiosity was aroused.

"So! le petite mademoiselle, she is not the innocent child she does appear. Ha! this will be a revenge over mi ladi. She calls me fool, idiot! We shall see now what we shall see!"

After reading the note, she, grasping it firmly in her hand, made her way to her ladyship's dressing-room.

When they alighted from their carriage after the drive in the park Beryl made her way directly to her own room. She paced nervously up and down the chamber.

"How wicked, how mean, how contemptible I feel!" she cried, her face flushing a deep crimson. "Why was I persuaded, and yet, what could I do? He pleaded so hard, his eyes expressed the feelings of his soul. He read my secret at once!"

She heaved a deep sigh, and sank down into her chair overcome by a feeling of shame.

"I feel like a traitor. This must not go on. It must end—once for all. I cannot act the part he would have me act. No, no—a thousand times, no."

She took off her mantle and hat, and drawing her Davenport to her tried to write.

But the pen never moved.

"I cannot do it," she moaned, the tears flooding her fair, rounded cheeks. "No, no, I cannot—I cannot!"

She sprang to her feet and choked back her sobs.

"Am I a coward?" she cried, vehemently. "I, the daughter of a soldier, an ardent coward; that I thus dread to inflict the slightest pain upon myself! It is impossible!"

Better do it at once; I have been weak, but now I shall be strong."

Compressing her lips firmly together, she sat down once more, and took up the pen.

Before she had written the date she was interrupted by a loud tap at her door.

With a cry of impatience she opened it.

"A letter, miss," said the footman with a slight grin.

She snatched at the note eagerly. She saw it was from him.

Tearing it open she read the contents.

A cry of pain escaped from her lips, and she reeled back, her face pallid as that of a corpse.

"Leaving England, perhaps for ever," she murmured. "It has come at last. I am sufficiently punished for my treachery and deceit."

Taking up her hat and mantle she put them carelessly on, and then almost flew down the stairs and out into the open air—down Duke-street and into Oxford-street.

Here all was noise and bustle. Hansoms, broughams, open carriages, buses, vans and carts, were passing and repassing in endless confusion.

"Do you want to cross, miss?" asked a policeman, who was attracted by her pure, beautiful face, and small, shrinking figure.

"No, I want a conveyance," she said, timidly, for she was a comparative stranger in this great, whirling, restless city.

"Bus oransom, miss?"

"I want to go to Regent's Park."

"Aansom'll be best, miss. H! there, anson!"

"Rather a refined 'un, but good-natured, like the rest," he muttered, as he looked at the half-crown she had slipped into his hand. Rather a pity after all; seems too good for St. John's Wood, that she do."

And with a sympathising sigh X 29 pocketed the liberal douceur and resumed his beat.

With a palpitating heart and pale cheek, Beryl entered the park.

She looked eagerly from side to side.

No one was to be seen.

"I am late, and perhaps he could not wait," she said, her heart sinking.

Miss Chester, you are here! How good, how generous, of you!"

She turned quickly around, and the next moment both of her hands were grasped by Captain Bertie Wilmot.

"I feared you would be angry, he said, as they walked beneath the bright green leafy branches.

"Angry?" she asked, opening wide her large, azure eyes. "Why should I have been? Had you not written I might not have had the opportunity of bidding you good-bye."

He looked rather disconcerted at her ingenuousness.

"But still it was very good of you. I want to speak to you seriously, Beryl."

She gave a slight start; it was the first time he had called her by her Christian name.

"I can no longer keep silent," he continued, not noticing her discomposure. "I love you devotedly, as a man can never love but once. Tell me, darling, can I hope, dare I hope, that you will ever return my love?"

She drew gently away from his side, her lips quivering and her eyes filling with tears.

"This is madness, Captain Wilmot. As you know, I am a penniless girl, earning my own living. You told me you were in trouble. By yourself you might fight and conquer adversity, but with a wife to weigh you down it would be very different."

He winced slightly at the word wife.

"But tell me, Beryl, do you love me?" he demanded.

She drew herself up with flashing eyes and flaming cheeks.

"You are cruel!" she cried, indignantly.

"Ah, no, Beryl, it is you who are cruel. You know you have entranced me; you know that my ruined life could be made doubly miserable by knowing I had not your love. All this

you know, and yet you refuse me the slightest comfort during my exile."

All his drawing manner of speech had fled, and the words followed each other in hot and rapid succession.

Beryl sighed deeply.

"Spare me," she said, piteously.

A cry of joy escaped his lips.

They had strolled along an unfrequented path, and they were quite alone.

With a quick movement he encircled her waist with his strong arm, and drew her to his breast.

"You do love me, Beryl; you are mine and mine only!"

He pressed his hot lips fervently to her cheek.

For a moment she was in ecstasy, then a flood of shame swept over her, and dragging herself from his embrace she sank down on a seat and covered her face with her hands.

Bertie Wilmot looked at her curiously. He could neither understand nor appreciate her. For all his outside veneer of elegance and refinement the man's utmost soul was coarse as that of an untutored savage.

He approached her gently, and tried to withdraw her hands from her burning face; but she repulsed him.

At that moment she felt she almost hated him.

Intuitively she saw that he had taken an unfair advantage of her youth and inexperience.

"Leave me!" she said, huskily.

"Never!" he replied boldly, more determined than ever to win the priceless treasure, which after winning he would value at nothing.

The pride of the man was aroused, the spirit of conquest had got him in its clutches, and though shame and misery might follow he recked not of the price to be paid for his triumph.

"Hear me, Beryl. Why should I leave England miserable and wretched, when the light of your eyes is sufficient to make me feel happy? Why should I be alone and forlorn, when you can give me your love? Why, then, would you deny me? Think you not I am wretched enough without carrying about with me a broken heart?"

He paused, but she made no sign that she heard him.

A quick heaving of the bosom and a nervous twitching of the fingers told him, however, that she had not only heard, but that his words had produced an effect.

The devilish spirit of the man rejoiced.

"Can it be," he continued, determined to make one grand, desperate stroke, "that you are selfish—that you are afraid of your own peace of mind?"

She drew her hands from her face and looked at him reproachfully.

That look was enough. He had conquered.

The breach in the fortress was practicable and the enemy had only to enter.

With cunningly-devised phrases he combated her maidenly scruples one by one, and at last wrung the avowal from her lips that she loved him.

Alas for Beryl! Those few words were to cause her many a weary, restless night, many a sad, mournful day, and many a bitter tear.

But this she knew not; all seemed truthful and honourable, and she had no fear.

An hour passed away in pleasant nothings with which lovers can so easily satisfy themselves, and then she arose.

"Shall I tell Lady Flora?" she asked, shyly.

He shrank back as though he had received a blow in the face.

"Not for worlds!" he cried, hurriedly.

"But it looks so deceitful, Bertie, and—and she may question me, and I cannot tell her a lie! I felt as though I was acting one to-day."

"It would be madness—it would utterly ruin me! Surely you can manage for a week, darling! and by the end of that time my

affairs will be settled, and we can start together for the Continent. You must not tell anybody a tale."

"But our—our—she stammered and blushed—"marriage? Will they not know then?"

It was his turn to flush now.

"Oh, yes, of course! I think we can manage that all right. Don't worry your little head about that, my sweet, little pet!"

She looked at him in some bewilderment.

"But there are preliminaries to a marriage?"

"Of course," he said, hurriedly, his brow contracted by a slight frown. "But that will be settled. I will see to all that, my darling!"

She sighed, and clung closer to his arm.

She had given him the most precious gift she had to bestow, and henceforth she must trust and be guided by him.

He bent down and kissed her.

"I must see you to-morrow, my own darling!" he whispered.

She looked at him confidently.

The next moment she was seated in a handsome, and being whirled away in the direction of Manchester-square.

### CHAPTER III.

BERYL CHESTER had barely taken off her outside garments when a knock was heard at the door, and Marie entered.

"Ah, mademoiselle, there is a tempest, a storm! Miladi is mad, wild, desperate—what shall I say? A very tigress would be as a heaven-born babe by her side. *Mon Dieu!* it is terrible!"

Beryl looked at the maid in astonishment.

"What have I to do with this?" she demanded, haughtily.

"Your pardon, mademoiselle, but miladi said she wished to see you. It was when she heard you were out she flew into this passion. *Ma foi!* never did I see such before."

"Does Lady Flora require me?"

"Oui, mademoiselle. Therefore am I here." With quiet dignity Beryl swept past the garrulous Frenchwoman, and went straight to Lady Flora's boudoir.

Her ladyship, attired in a rich dinner dress of deep blue velvet, was pacing furiously up and down.

"You sent for me, Lady Flora?" she said, shrinking back before the fierce gaze of the other.

"I did, Miss Chester," with a ring of ineffable scorn in her voice. "I did send for you. Where have you been?"

"I have been out for a little time."

"No lies! You have been out ever since we returned from the Park."

Beryl remained silent.

"Do you dare deny it?"

"I said I had been out!"

"Yes; but you did not say with whom. I demand an answer!"

The girl's spirit was now thoroughly aroused.

"I can give you no further information, Lady Flora," she said, with dignity. "I do not think you have any right to ask such questions!"

"Do you not? How dignified you have become. Yet I think, were I in your place, I should have thoughts of my dignity before I entered into secret correspondence with my employer's visitor!"

Beryl turned deathly white, and clutched at the back of a chair for support.

Lady Flora experienced a fierce feeling of triumph.

"That I have been greatly deceived in you I frankly admit," she continued. "I thought you pure, innocent and straightforward, instead of which I find you the reverse—cunning, deceitful, sly, and, I fear, worse!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Beryl, almost savagely, and fearlessly confronting her accuser.

"I mean exactly what I say. I find out that you are in the habit of clandestinely meeting a man who is engaged to be married."

The shot told; Beryl with difficulty could support herself.

The room seemed swimming around her, and the last four words rang in her ears like a death-knell.

"Engaged to be married! It is not true," she said, helplessly.

Her ladyship uttered a long, mocking laugh.

"It is true," she said, triumphantly. "On the Derby night Captain Wilmot asked me to be his wife, and I consented. Of course, I have no objection to him amusing himself, as I know there would be nothing serious between him and you. I am only shocked at your behaviour. The daughter of an old and valiant officer should have more respect for herself than allow any man to make a toy of her for his idle hours."

The last thrust had a terrible effect.

Beryl raised her hands with a look, half-pleading, half-terrified, in her eyes, and then dropped senseless to the ground.

Lady Flora gazed at her contemptuously.

"I believe she is only a weak, silly fool after all."

Then she rang the bell, and Marie entered the boudoir.

"Miss Chester has fainted, Marie. See if you can do anything for her. If not, you had better send for Dr. Marshall. I can't keep the dinner waiting any longer."

As she left the room the maid compressed her lips.

"Cruel as steel is miladi," she murmured.

"Why did I bring this about? Ever am I unfortunate. I thought to hurt her who has so often insulted me; but *Mon Dieu!* I never meant to injure this pretty flower."

She poured out a glass of water and bathed Beryl's forehead.

The girl's eyes slowly opened, and she gazed round the room. Then a violent shudder agitated her frame, and by a strenuous effort she rose to her feet.

"I have been ill, have I not?" she asked, wearily.

"Oui, mademoiselle, but you will soon be better. A little brandy and a good sleep."

"No, no, not sleep. I must act, and at once. I have been vilely insulted. I—"

She stopped, and then courteously declining any further assistance from the maid, staggered laboriously to her own room.

How lonely, how terribly lonely and miserable she felt!

Not a friend had she in the world; and she had proved false!

She tried to doubt the truth of Lady Flora's words, but could not.

Every little thing she had witnessed between them occurred to her. Their evident understanding on the race-course, Lady Flora's agitation, her visit even to the Park that day—all stamped her statement with the truth.

Utterly friendless and alone as she was, she, however, determined that she would not stay another night beneath that roof.

She had still the address of the house in Kilburn where she had lodged before coming to Manchester square, and thither she would repair.

Then on the morrow she could settle upon some plan for the future.

With a weary heart, and an aching brain, she commenced to pack up her trunks, after which she wrapped herself up in her cloak and descended the broad staircase.

As she passed the dining-room door she heard the hard, cruel laugh of Lady Flora ringing out.

This caused her to hurry her footsteps, and in another moment she was standing out upon the pavement.

Only anxious to escape from the house where she had been so miserable, she hurried down Duke-street, and stood at the corner of Oxford-street, which was now almost deserted.

How different was its appearance from that



it had presented a few hours before, and how different were her feelings!

Even the friendly policeman had disappeared, and there was no one near to hail a cab for her.

She would have walked, but she did not know which way to turn.

As she stood there half-bewildered, and still very weak and faint, a man came hurrying along from the direction of Baywater, and almost ran against her.

He was a comparatively young man, but his sunbrown cheeks, which contrasted strangely with his light golden hair and moustache, and his large grey eyes, bespoke a long residence beneath a tropical sun.

He raised his hat, and apologised for his carelessness.

She looked at him in a dazed manner that at once attracted his attention.

"Miss Chester, can it possibly be you?" he said, in a tone of mingled pain and surprise.

She gave a little start of pleasure, which, however, instantly vanished before the remembrance of her misery and the shame she had suffered.

"Mr. Vaughan," she said, in a restrained tone. "I never thought of seeing you in London!"

Harry Vaughan sighed, and held out his hand, but she did not notice it.

He looked at her more closely, and saw the agony she was suffering depicted in her white, scared looking face.

"Are you ill or in trouble, Beryl?" he said, softly. "Tell me, can I help you?"

"No, no, I am not ill, but I want a cab. I wish to go to Kilburn at once."

He hailed a passing vehicle and placed her carefully inside it, then he stood lingeringly at the step.

"May I accompany you?" he asked wistfully. "I have been looking all over England for you, and now my furlough is nearly up."

She gave him the longest for permission, and as he seated himself beside her she knew she was not without one true and faithful friend.

She had known Harry Vaughan for several years. He had joined Colonel Chester's regiment as a subaltern, when he first arrived in India, and he had been one of the few at the side of the death-bed when the gallant soldier had breathed his last.

Simple-hearted, brave and generous, he had been an universal favourite in the station, and the Colonel had treated him like a son.

Very early had Harry Vaughan lost his heart to the sweet pansy-eyed Beryl, but as time passed he saw that, beyond the love of a sister, she could give him nothing in return.

Still he remained faithful. She was more than life to him, and he was content to worship her from afar rather than lose his idol altogether.

It was a sad blow to him when the Colonel died, and she left for England; but he plodded steadily on, patiently waiting for the next twelve months to pass, at the end of which time he would be entitled to a long furlough, and then he would be able once more to see her.

Yes, he would make the journey of seven thousand miles for the pleasure of beholding and speaking to the one he loved, knowing that he could expect nothing more.

And now that he was seated by her side, with none others present, he felt that a greater distance than ever divided them.

#### CHAPTER IV.

WHEN the Honourable Bertie Wilmot had seen Beryl safely ensconced in her cab he turned on his heel, and hailing the next one that passed, bade the man drive him to the Junior Army and Navy Club.

He was anything but easy in his mind. His pecuniary difficulties had reached that acute stage when they must be fairly faced.

The winning of the Derby by The Duke had upset all his calculations, and it had been

only with the greatest difficulty that he had managed to raise the money to pay off his debts of honour.

Other creditors there were, many of them, and most of these must be satisfied almost immediately.

He opened the trap and bade the man drive him to his chambers in Down-street, Piccadilly.

"It is useless putting the thing off any longer," he muttered beneath his moustache. "I had better face it once for all. Of course, I must sell out, and then see what Basingstoke will plank down with his sister. Lady Flora has style and beauty and all that sort of thing, and with a good sinecure we might rub along pretty comfortably."

His brow became contracted, and he stroked his chin thoughtfully.

"No; I cannot lose little Beryl; but she must know that marriage is out of the question. That will soon be settled. I daresay she will make a pretty little resistance, but love will overcome all that, and then, beyond a feeble reproof or two, I shall hear nothing further of it. I hope she won't let Lady Flora into the secret, though. I should scarcely care to face that young lady in a passion."

The hansom stopping at twenty-seven put an end to his soliloquy, and he ascended to his chambers with a light step.

His servant was at the door to receive him.

"Well, Sam, any news?"

"No, sir, but plenty of callers," replied Sam, with a military salute.

"So I suppose. Of course you told them you did not know where I was?"

"I hope I obeyed your orders, sir."

"That is right. Now let me have my letters."

"Lady Herrington has been here three times to make inquiries."

Wilmot gave a satisfied smile.

She could have heard nothing of his clandestine meetings with her companion.

"Anyone else particular?"

"No, sir. The Earl of Basingstoke, Lord Arbutnot, Sir Charles—"

"That will do; my letters."

"Yes, sir. I looked 'em up in the safe, sir, for safety. I'll go and fetch 'em at once, sir. Mr. Evans, the Army agent, has been here, sir; he said as 'ow he thought you might want to make a change, or—"

"It's like his infernal impudence. Never mind him, Sam; let me have the letters."

"Yes, sir."

Sam hastily disappeared, and throwing himself into a luxurious chair, the gallant Captain picked up the *Evening Standard*, and glanced casually over the outer page.

The first thing that attracted his attention was an advertisement in the "agony" column.

He gave a short, quick ejaculation of surprise, and then read the advertisement through.

It was only one of many that appear every day, but the name attracted his attention.

It ran as follows,—

"CHESTER.—If Miss Beryl Chester, daughter of the late Colonel Chester, who died at Resalunga, in the North-West Provinces of India, will communicate with Messrs. Snapper, Best, and Co, 95, Gray's Inn-square, she will hear of something greatly to her advantage."

He read this advertisement through twice before Sam returned with the letters.

"They must wait," he said impatiently. "Give me me a brandy-and-soda, Sam, and then leave me."

The servant silently obeyed, and Bertie Wilmot was left alone with his own thoughts.

"I would give a pony to know the meaning of this," he said, tapping the advertisement impatiently. "Who knows but this may be a fortune awaiting her, and if it is—if it is, why should I not have it? She would only be,

too glad to marry me, and I am not bound by any promise to Flora."

He arose from his seat, and crossed over to his desk.

"I will write to Evans; or stay, a telegram might find him to-night, and we shall lose no time."

Taking up his hat he walked to his club, wrote the telegram and sent it off; then he sat down in a quiet corner of the dining-room and partook of a light dinner.

"I shall have just time to stroll back," he said, as he lighted a fragrant Havannah.

When he reached his chambers Evans had not arrived, but half-an-hour later the suave agent made his appearance.

"Good evening, Captain Wilmot, I received your telegram and came at once. You wish to sell or exchange?"

"Neither," replied Wilmot, stiffly. "I want you to do me a service."

"With the greatest pleasure in the world, my dear sir. What is it?"

Bertie produced the *Evening Standard*.

"I want you to make inquiries concerning this. I think I know the lady to whom it refers. By to-morrow afternoon I must know all concerning it."

Mr. Evans fixed his sharp, cunning eyes full upon the guardsman's face.

"I think I understand," he said, slowly.

"What the deuce do you mean?"

"Nothing, Captain, nothing, only that I understand what you wish me to do."

Shortly after noon the next day Mr. Evans entered with a beaming face.

"Well?" asked Captain Wilmot, impatiently.

"If you have any interest in the young lady you are a lucky man," exclaimed Evans, rubbing his hands together vigorously. "She is a great heiress!"

"An heiress!"

"Yes, an uncle of hers has died, leaving her over two hundred thousand pounds in consols, and as much in railway stocks."

Wilmot fairly sprang from his seat.

"Is this true?" he said excitedly.

"True as gospel, Captain; but she has only a life interest."

The guardsman's face fell.

"You could insure her life, Captain," suggested the agent.

"But who gets the reversion?"

"All the property comes to her children if she has any; if not, it reverts to the Crown."

"Four hundred thousand pounds, that brings in—"

"Nearly fifteen thousand a year, Captain. A very nice income indeed."

"You are right, Evans. Could you let me have a few hundreds for two or three months?"

"On what security, Captain?"

"My paper."

The agent shook his head.

"I could let you have as much as you liked if Miss Chester's signature was across it."

The guardsman turned pale.

"What do you take me for?" he demanded, angrily.

The other shrugged his shoulders.

"The labourer is worthy of his hire, Captain. If you help her to thousands I don't see why she should not assist you to hundreds!"

Still Wilmot hesitated.

"No, no," he said, half aloud. "It might spoil all."

The cunning eyes of the agent glistened.

His surmise was correct.

The Honourable Bertie Wilmot not only knew this heiress, but would probably marry her.

This knowledge was sufficient to ensure to Bertie the amount he might require at some two hundred and fifty per cent. interest.

"And now for Beryl," said the Captain, after the agent had departed. "I had better tell her nothing of this matter until after the

event takes place. She might think I was marrying her money, not her."

He took up the cheque left by Evans, and placing it in his breast pocket, strolled towards the bank with a lighter heart than he had known for many a day.

First dropping into the club for luncheon, he then made the best of his way to the rendezvous at Regent's Park.

Beryl had not arrived, so, lighting a cigar, he strolled carelessly up and down the avenue.

Half-an-hour passed, and she had not come; then an hour, which was presently increased to two; but still she never made her appearance.

"Strange!" he muttered. "Flora is detaining her. I must call there at once. Perhaps she is ill."

He turned sick at the very thought.

If she were to die all his *chateau d'Espagne* would vanish into thin air.

He rang the bell violently at Lord Basingstoke's mansion.

"Is Miss Ches—" he began, and then corrected himself,—

"Is the Earl at home?"

No; the Earl was not, but Lady Flora would be pleased to see Captain Wilmot.

The Captain would willingly have avoided the *titte à titte*, but he knew not how to do so. Besides, he was more than anxious to hear something of Beryl.

Lady Flora met him with a gracious smile. "Quite a stranger, I declare! We thought we had lost you, Captain."

He murmured something about business in the North.

"In the North-west, I suppose?" she asked, maliciously. "At least, I thought you would have bidden us good-bye."

"I was in great haste; but had I known I should be missed by one of the fairest of her sex I should certainly have come. I hope I have atoned for my neglect by not losing a moment upon my return?"

"But you were in London yesterday!"

"Ye—es," he said, turning very red in the face.

"This will never do," he thought. "Lady Flora is evidently bent upon a declaration. I wish Basingstoke would make his appearance. How is the charming Miss Chester?" he asked, plunging abruptly into the subject that had brought him to the square.

"Captain Wilmot, I do not wish that person's name mentioned in my hearing again," she said, haughtily. "I learnt all yesterday, and I turned her out of the house at once."

"Gone!" he cried, despairingly.

"I hope your heart will not break?" she said, with a sneer.

He uttered a forced laugh.

"Not very likely, Lady Flora," he said, with a desperate effort at composure; "but I must not trespass on your time further to-day. I have an appointment, and I dine at the mess. May I have a cup of tea to-morrow afternoon?"

"You really do not deserve it!" she said, playfully; "but I suppose I must promise."

Glad to escape on any terms, he was passing through the door when a cabman came up with a note in his hand.

"I've come for the luggage of Miss Chester of Kilburn. Here's her authority; she sez as there's two trunks and a bonnet box."

"There the things are—take 'em!" said the porter, superciliously. "We don't want 'em!"

Luck seemed to be favouring the young guardsman with a vengeance.

He stood at a little distance and patiently waited until the man had placed the luggage on the top of the cab, and himself on the seat.

Then as he was turning his horse he beckoned to him.

"Drive me to where you are taking the luggage and you shall have this."

He held up a sovereign, and the man hesitated.

"It's agin orders, sir," he murmured.

"Very well. I can follow you in another vehicle."

"So you could, sir. But I'll tell yer what I'll do. If you'll get out at the corner of the street and follow on foot I'll drive slow."

The cabman stopped at the corner of a short ultra-respectable looking street, and Bertie alighted.

As he looked at the two long lines of bay-windowed cottages, each exactly like its neighbours, with glaring green venetian blinds, common net curtains, and plants or antediluvian work-boxes or tea-caddies in the windows, he absolutely shuddered.

"It is like a horrible nightmare," he muttered, stroking his heavy moustache. "One deserves something in return for inflicting this upon oneself."

He kept his gaze fixed upon the house before the door of which the cab had stopped, until he saw the driver scrambling upon the box.

Then he crossed over and addressed the homely-looking woman who, with paraffin lamp in hand, was about to close the door.

"Miss Chester is in, I hope. In the parlour is she? Thank you."

Before a reply could be vouchsafed he had pushed past her and laid his hand upon the knob.

Giving a promonitory rap he entered.

A common reading lamp with a green paper shade showed a dim light, but by its aid he easily recognised Beryl, very pale and wan, lying on the hard, horsehair couch.

Thinking it was the landlady she lay perfectly still, with her eyes partly closed, and her small delicate hands clasped across her bosom.

"Beryl!" he cried; "my darling."

She sprang to her feet, and he held out his hands, but she shrank back into the farthest corner of the room.

"How could you act thus?" he asked, in an injured and mournful tone. "My heart is almost broken."

Her bosom rose and fell tumultuously, and stretching out her hand she pointed to the door.

She could only utter one word, and that came from her very soul,—

"Go!"

"Beryl, are you ill or mad? You bid me go to my death. Without you I could never live."

She gave him a look of scorn.

"Go, to your promised bride," she repeated sternly.

"You are my promised bride, my precious one, nor do I want other. My darling, what have I done to deserve this? During the whole of this day have I been making preparations for our nuptials. Why this mute change? Have you already regretted the words you uttered twenty-four hours ago?"

"Yes, yes, a thousand times yes. I did not then know you were engaged to be married to Lady Flora Herrington. What had I done, Captain Wilmot, that you should think I would consent to be the toy of your idle hours?" she demanded, unconsciously repeating the words of Lady Flora.

Bertie Wilmot dropped upon one knee.

"By heavens, you do me wrong, Beryl!" he said solemnly. "I never was engaged to be married to Lady Flora, I mean it. We are old friends, but—nothing more. Will you not believe me, my true, my only love?"

She looked down into his handsome face, and felt her resolution waning.

"Lady Flora said so herself," she murmured.

Wilmot muttered an oath beneath his breath.

"It is false! Beryl, how could you believe it true? You are the only woman I ever loved sincerely; you are the only one I ever asked to be my wife!"

A thrill of exaltation flowed through her frame. She had not been deceived after all; he was true.

A great weight seemed lifted off her mind,

and sinking down upon the couch she sought relief in a flood of tears.

A look of triumph flashed from his eyes.

"You trust me, you love me, Beryl? You will be my wife?"

"I will," she said, solemnly.

He took her in his arms and imprinted a passionate kiss upon her hot wet cheek.

"Heaven bless you, my Beryl!" he said, with rather an awkward attempt at solemnity; but she never noticed his awkwardness.

She was happy, and in her happiness not at all inclined to be hypercritical.

As they sat side by side upon the couch, he conjuring up for her dreams of future happiness and bliss, and she listening in rapt attention to his well-chosen and delusive words, there came another rap at the door, and Mrs. Benson, the landlady, entered with a scared look on her face.

"Beg pardon, miss, but the other gentleman as was here yesterday, he wants to know how you are, and if he may see you fer a moment?"

Bertie's face flashed. (She had told him she knew no one in London, and yet here was a masculine acquaintance anxiously inquiring after her welfare. Was he not, after all, to be allowed to carry off this rich prize without a struggle?)

"Yes, Mrs. Benson, tell him to come in," she said, with a weary smile at her lover's flushed face. "It is a very old friend, one of the best, kindest, dearest souls that ever lived. He did all his soldiering at Reasburg."

Before she could explain further Harry Vaughan entered the room.

She ran to meet him.

"Why, Beryl, you look as bright and happy as ever!" he cried, delightedly grasping her hands. "What magic has been at work? I—"

"Captain Wilmot, of the Guards; Major Vaughan, of the 19th Bengal Infantry."

The two men saluted each other ceremoniously, and at the very moment their hands met, in what should have been a grasp of friendship, they knew they hated each other with an unquenchable hatred.

"I do hope you will be happy, Beryl," said poor Harry the day before the marriage; but this Wilmot's character?"

She placed her tiny hand over his lips.

"I cannot hear you say anything about him, Harry," she said, pleadingly.

Harry Vaughan shook his head, and sighed.

"Perhaps you are right, Beryl; but I wish there was someone else to take her father's place than me to-morrow," he added, in an undertone.

And so the marriage was finally arranged; and on this bright, sunny morning in early June, Beryl Chester and Bertie Wilmot stood side by side in the little church at Hampstead, and repeated the words that were to bind them together for life.

Scarcely had the words been pronounced that made them one when the bright sky became overcast; loud rumblings of thunder were heard, the lightning flashed, and then the rain came down in torrents.

"Is it an omen?" thought Harry Vaughan, moodily. "I know not why, but I sorely mistrust this drawing aristocrat."

That night, whilst the bride and bridegroom were speeding across the Channel, en route for Paris, Harry Vaughan was sitting up writing several important letters.

One was to the India Office, resigning his commission.

"I cannot return to India and leave her entirely alone to the mercy of that man," he said, as he sealed the letter. "I have no doubt I should have gained promotion pretty quickly; but what of that if she had wanted me, and I was thousands of miles away?"

He could not sleep that night, he knew, so he determined to read until day broke, when he could take a long walk and try to compose his thoughts.

He took up a copy of the *Times*, and an



exclamation of astonishment and anger broke from his lips.

He had alighted upon the advertisement of Messrs. Snapper, Best and Co.

"I wonder why that fellow should have been in such haste to marry a penniless girl? I heard he was ruined. Now all is plain. The fellow has seen this advertisement, and made inquiries. Probably, Beryl is an heiress, and the scoundrel has married her for her money."

He clenched his fist and ground his teeth.

"Why did I not see this before?" he cried.

"Why was I not able to warn her in time? Poor girl! she will want a friend, and she shall find one in me. Woe betide that fellow if he acts wrongly towards her; it would have been better for him had he never been born!"

## CHAPTER V.

Eighteen months have passed away since the day of the marriage, and Beryl is seated in a large lounging chair on the verandah of an enchanting villa which stands on the eastern coast of Sicily, a couple of miles from Messina.

Her robe is of a light, soft, clinging material, richly trimmed with silver and pearls; her small, taper fingers are laden with priceless gems, and diamonds glitter and flash in her coronal of luxuriant hair and in the buckles of her tiny white satin shoes; round her shoulders she wears a cashmere shawl, a fellow to one worn by the highest lady in England; but with all this magnificent apparel she looks very different from the quiet, joyful girl whom we saw on Epsom Downs in the Earl of Basingstoke's drag.

Her cheeks are pale and attenuated, she has aged many years, and signs of care and suffering are not wanting on the broad, marble-like brow.

At her feet lies the deep blue waters of the Mediterranean, reflecting in their azure depths the myriad of stars that were shining above. Away to the right rises the awe-inspiring Etna, around whose lofty crest there is a huge coronet of fiery red, the reflection of the terrible fires raging and seething down at its centre.

Behind her, through the partly-opened shutters, comes a flood of light, and the sounds of loud voices and laughter, mixed with the rattle of dice, and anon comes a fierce and desperate oath.

As one deeper curse than another is borne to her ears she shudders, and draws her wrap closer around her.

It is winter away in England, but here it is like summer; the air is fresh and balmy, and the heavy smell of tropical flowers is borne on the western breeze.

Hour after hour passes, but still she does not move. The stars die out one by one, the deep blue sea is covered with a heavy mist, the scent in the air grows fresher and stronger, and far away behind the villa the horizon begins to be streaked with purple and red.

Morning is about to break, and the breeze that springs up is positively chilly.

With a weary cry, half moan, half sigh, she rises to her seat, and, with a violent shiver, walks to and fro along the verandah.

Presently the words within the villa die away, then one of the windows is thrown wide open; and, with a staggering, uncertain step the Honourable Bertie Wilmot comes out upon the verandah.

His face is flushed and his eyes bloodshot, whilst his evening dress is disarranged and his hair ruffled.

"Halloa, Beryl, you here yet?" he cries.

"I thought you had gone to bed long ago!"

"I could not sleep if I had done so. I preferred sitting here."

Wilmot's brow grew dark.

"I suppose you like playing the sanctimonious preacher, don't you? But I have told you before I won't have your sermons, and—I won't."

She shrank from him as though he had been a leper.

"Why don't you speak? What are you looking at me in that fashion for, eh? Are you afraid I shall bite you, or that if I touch you it will contaminate you?"

"I am not afraid," she replied, quietly.

The man was somewhat cowed and sobered by the gentle dignity of this outraged woman. Moreover, he had use for her at the present moment, and it would not be prudent for him to act with violence.

"Don't let us quarrel, Beryl," he said, "I am miserable enough, Heaven only knows. I have lost over forty thousand pounds this week!"

She uttered a cry of horror and astonishment.

"Forty thousand pounds! You can never pay such an amount. You have already spent nearly one hundred thousand this year!"

"I cannot help luck going dead against me, and favouring the Count Villari and the Chevalier de St. Croix, can I? Had not that uncle of yours made such a foolish will we would have got the money without difficulty."

"Are you not ashamed to speak of him to whom we owe everything in such a manner?" she asked.

"He was an old fool!" he retorted, savagely; "but step inside for a minute, it is deuced cold out here. Forsyth says he can let me have the money on my bill."

"It is very kind of Sir Charles Forsyth, seeing he has already won more than that of you during his stay here as your guest," she said, scornfully.

"Don't be an idiot. There is the bill, now sign it. We can arrange about the insurance by telegraph."

He placed the stamped paper before her and the pen in her hand.

A strange, fixed look of determination shone in her eyes.

"I shall not sign it," she said, firmly.

"Not sign it?" he cried, with a laugh.

"You are my wife, and will do as I bid you."

He took up a slight riding-whip that lay upon one of the couches and twisted it nervously between his fingers.

"Come, come, don't be a fool, Beryl; you must sign it, or I shall be disgraced for ever."

She took up the bill and tore it into a hundred pieces.

"That is my reply," she said, firmly. "I will no longer be a party to this gambling and wickedness."

A cruel gleam shone in his eyes. He raised the whip, it quivered in the air a moment, and then fell upon her pure, beautiful cheek, leaving a long bar of red quivering flesh across it.

She uttered but one word, and that she hurled at him with all the vehemence of her outraged spirit,—

"Coward!"

The word stung his soul worse than the whip lash had her tender cheek, for he knew he deserved the opprobrious epithet.

With a vile, fierce oath he left the room, and Beryl sank back upon the couch, her brain seething and boiling with a fiercer fire than that which raged in the centre of Etna itself.

## CHAPTER VI.

A few hours later she had recovered her composure, and was seated in a small chamber facing the south.

The sun was pouring a flood of golden light into the room, and seemed to cast a radiant halo around her slight, slender figure, as she sat in a large, low-seated, crimson velvet chair, clad in a loose, flowing robe of white cashmere.

One cheek—the cheek that bore the evidence of her treacherous husband's dastardly cowardice—rested upon her delicate hand, and her long, dark lashes shaded her large and glorious eyes.

Suddenly she gave a slight start as she heard a firm, manly footstep on the verandah without, and a rich, hectic glow suffused her brow.

The next moment Harry Vaughan, with a grave look on his face, entered.

"Beryl," he said, quietly taking both her hands in his, "I thank you for having kept your promise. When I first discovered that he knew of your legacy before your marriage I followed you, and made you promise that if ever you were in trouble you would send for, and confide in me. You have done so, and I thank you for your trust."

She looked at him with a wan, feeble attempt at a smile.

"I fear I have scarcely kept my promise to the letter," she said, quietly, "for I have been in trouble ever since this ill-fated ring encircled my finger."

She drew from her bosom her wedding ring, which she had taken off five minutes after receiving the blow.

"Now the climax has arrived, and I ask your advice and counsel as the only friend I possess in the world."

Then, in a cold, hard, restrained voice, that pained him far more than the wildest emotion could have done, she told him of what had occurred that morning.

The strong man's frame quivered as he listened, and he looked to and fro as though he would fall.

"And he did this?" he asked, fiercely.

"Harry, for Heaven's sake, for my sake, for the sake of the friendship you bore my father, control yourself!"

"Beryl, my angel!" he cried, in the gust of passion with which he was overpowered, forgetting his habitual reserve. "He shall pay for that blow with his life!"

Beryl laid her hand gently upon his arm.

"Is this noble? Is this generous?" she cried. "Be true to yourself and me! I sent to ask your advice as to the course I should pursue, and you lose control over yourself! Harry Vaughan, bad as he is, you must not forget he is my husband. Promise me, on your word of honour, you will not risk a quarrel with him? Promise me?" she repeated, "for I know you would never break your word."

A fierce struggle took place in his breast.

"I promise," he said, huskily, "on one condition. I must make the condition, Beryl," he added, apologetically. "You must leave this treacherous coward—leave him for ever."

"He is my husband," she murmured. "I dare not—I cannot!"

She leaned back, a sickly pallor overspreading her face, for she suddenly realised the truth—that she was married to one man, and loved another.

She now knew too well that her whole heart belonged to the self-sacrificing, devoted man before her, and her pure mind was affrighted at its own discovery.

Never guessing the cause of her sudden faintness, Harry Vaughan sank upon his knees at her feet, and clasped her hand.

"Beryl, I conjure you by all you hold sacred to leave this man at once!" he cried.

"He is utterly unworthy of you. You asked my advice; you have it. I cannot live, knowing what he has done, and leave you with him. Fly from him as you would from a plague, or—"

At that moment the door was flung open, and with his features contorted by passion, Bertie Wilmot strode into the room.

"What is the meaning of this pretty scene?" he demanded, fiercely.

Harry Vaughan sprang to his feet.

"It means, Captain Wilmot, that you are a scoundrel!" he said, half choking with passion.

"Harry, Harry, do not break your word," pleaded Beryl, earnestly.

"For your sake I will not," he replied, softly.

Wilmot foamed at the mouth with rage and fury.

Then he turned to his wife.  
"And so," he said with a bitter sneer, "this is your piety, this is your religion, you shameless creature!"

"You—," burst out Harry, but he was checked by the pleading look of the injured wife.

"I can explain it all, sir," said Beryl, with composed dignity. "Your insults I am used to, and one word more or less can make but little difference; but for my own honour and this gentleman I must explain."

"Proceed, madam," said Wilmot, the evil light in his eyes increasing each moment. "Proceed!"

"As you are aware, Major Vaughan was a close and faithful friend of my father."

"And now the friend of the father is a lover of the daughter? What a pity that the daughter is a wife, or perhaps that is rather an advantage in the eyes of such a high-minded couple."

Harry felt as though he could kill him where he stood, whilst Beryl's face, neck, and bosom became suffused with a rich carnation.

"That your vile suspicions are entirely unfounded you well know, sir," she replied, her proud spirit rising to her aid.

"Unfounded, are they? I am glad you think so, for no one else will when they hear of the scene I was myself a witness to; but pray go on, madam, with your story. I am an attentive listener."

"Sir," said Harry, hotly. "Nay, Beryl, I shall speak. Sir, I will tell you the meaning of the scene you saw. I had learnt of your dastardly cowardice to this fragile flower, and I was pleading to her, for her own sake and that of her dead father, to leave this house, to fly from here."

"With you?" asked Wilmot, contemptuously.

"Good me not too far, sir," said Harry, the veins on his temples standing out like knotted cords. "I have promised not to seek a quarrel with you."

"Very kind of you, I am sure, but seeing I am the injured party I can scarcely see why I should be grateful."

Then he turned once again to his wife, bending upon her a truly demoniacal glare.

"Leave the room, wanton," he cried, hoarsely; "I will settle accounts with your paramour alone."

Harry's passion was now beyond all control. "Scoundrel!" he cried, hoarsely. "You are a cowardly liar. That fair child is as pure as the Heaven above us!"

Wilmot's face turned of an ashen hue, and his hand mechanically sought his breast.

"None shall call me that and live," he cried.

At the same time he drew out a revolver and pointed it at Vaughan's head.

The latter had been in many a skirmish with the wild hill tribes of India, and his experience now stood him in good stead.

Quick as lightning he dashed forward and seized the hand of the desperate man.

A terrible struggle—a struggle for life and death—ensued; the men's breath came in fitful gasps, and each strained his nerves and muscles until it seemed they must break from the tension.

"You shall die!" hissed Wilmot, making a final attempt to release himself from the vice-like grasp.

Then there came a loud report, and the two fell headlong to the ground.

In speechless terror Beryl gazed at the cloud of blue smoke that enveloped the combatants.

A puff of air came through the casement, and the cloud gently lifting, she saw Harry Vaughan rising slowly from the ground, upon which Wilmot lay perfectly motionless.

Harry Vaughan was at her side in an instant, and as the servants and visitors rushed pell-mell into the room, he was raising her head as gently as though she had been but a babe.

She was at once taken to her bed-room, but

for the whole of that day and the next she never moved or spoke; the only sign of life being her gentle, fitful breathing.

Towards midnight her speech and power of motion returned, and then, with many a foreboding shake of the head, the local doctor pronounced her to be suffering from a severe attack of brain fever.

The fascinating Bartie Wilmot never spoke again.

The bullet that he had intended for Vaughan had penetrated his own breast, and lodged in his heart, causing instantaneous death.

An inquiry, of course, was held, but it was merely as a matter of form, for, even in death, the pistol was still clenched in the white, shapely hand.

For months and months Beryl lay on the threshold of the next world; but her youth finally conquered, and the grim skeleton, Death, was forced to forego his anticipated triumph.

During her illness, Harry Vaughan was most assiduous in his attentions, and spent more than half his time at the Villa Villieri; and when at last the eminent London physician, whom he had brought over, pronounced the turn for the better to have taken place, the strong man fairly broke down, and cried like a child.

Some two years after this a quiet, simple wedding took place in a quaint, ivy-clad church in Sussex.

The bridegroom was Harry Vaughan, and the bride was Beryl, no more sad and pensive, but with a bright, glad smile upon her pure, oval face.

As they left the church she clung closely to his arm, and looked up into his manly face confidently.

"At last!" she murmured, "I have found a safe haven of refuge. With this strong arm to protect me, I need fear neither storm nor tempest."

"No, darling mine!" he said, leaning down and looking into her blushing face with honest, love-lit eyes. "Never more, whilst I live, shall you be Tempest-Tossed!"

At that moment the bells clanged forth their joyful greeting; the villagers, who had known and loved Henry Vaughan ("our Master Henry," as they delighted to call him) since he was a boy, raised a mighty huzzah, and, amidst the good wishes of all who saw their happy faces, Beryl and her husband drove off, to enter a new and lovelier life.

[THE END.]

NOVELETTE.—(continued.)

## POOR LITTLE VAL.

—X—

### CHAPTER V.—(continued.)

In a few minutes Mrs. Byford entered the room, and, having heard of Val's arrival, demanded sharply,—

"Who is this girl, Cecil, and what does she want?"

She spoke in a thick, guttural voice, and her manner was coarse in the extreme; but the feeble, pitiable creature beside the fire answered, soothingly,—

"She is my grandchild, my dear, Laura's daughter, and she wishes to reside with us."

"So you are that good-for-nothing woman's daughter, are you? Well, what do you want with us? Where are your fine friends? And, let me tell you, we have nothing to spare to beggars. But for me, he would be homeless," and she pointed contemptuously to her husband. "You can't live on a title, can you? I never should have married him but for his lies. He told me he would introduce me to society—he! The poor wretch who can't call a penny his own—and I was such a fool I believed him."

During this harangue Cecil Byford sat downcast and deprecatory, whilst Val shrank

from the loud-voiced virago thus declaiming her wrongs. Suddenly she turned upon the girl,—

"What can you do?" she asked.

"I don't understand you," said Valentine, shrinking further into her corner. "Please explain."

"You're like the rest of your family—a precious idiot," retorted the lady. "Can you sing and play, do you know French, and all that sort of rubbish?"

"I—I can play, and draw a little. Of course I speak French and German, because I always lived abroad with papa."

"Well, look here, I'm not a hard woman, but I can't afford to keep any girl in idleness; so if you like to teach my niece (she's my ward, too) you may, if not, you'll have to go."

"I will stay, if you please," Val answered, tremulously. "Is your niece very far advanced in her studies?"

"Not she! and she's only ten, so you ought to manage pretty well. Come upstairs with me, and I'll show you where you can sleep for to-night," and she whisked Val off to a small room furnished with two beds, a washstand and a chair. "I don't go in for high art," she said, with an odious laugh, "it's a waste of money. Lydia! Where are you? Lydia!"

In answer to her call a child appeared, who bore so marked a likeness to Mrs. Byford that she might have passed for her own daughter.

"This is Miss Dalton, and she will be your governess. Learn all you can; her time is yours. You needn't change your dress, Miss Dalton; we don't stand on ceremony here," and she went away, accompanied by Lydia, who gave poor Val a parting sob.

She was left to find her way to the dining-room, where the meagreness of the fare contrasted strangely with the costly plate. Hungry as she was, Val could not eat, and, as no wine was forthcoming, she fared badly indeed.

She was heartily glad when Mrs. Byford told her she could go to her room, only her gladness was much tempered when she learned Lydia occupied the second bed.

The household rose early, and after a hasty and uncomfortable breakfast Valentine was escorted to the schoolroom, a bare and dirty apartment. Timidly she began her duties, conscious that to Lydia she was an object of derision. The child was bent upon annoying her, and succeeded so well that in a sudden access of wild despair poor Val broke into a wild flood of tears. Lydia regarded her with astonishment a moment, then pushing books and slates aside, coolly and deliberately left the room.

Val fled to her own apartment, only to stand transfixed at the door. Then indignation got the better of fear, and running forward she seized Mrs. Byford by the arm crying, "You wicked woman! how dare you, how dare you?"

The other turned calmly from her inspection of Val's belongings.

"Please to remember I am mistress here, Miss Dalton, and that I have a perfect right to examine your trunks if I choose. If you object you have your remedy. You can return to the friends who are weary of you already."

Val stood white and silent, her eyes clouded by anguish and fear of this woman, who lifting out a casket took from it Val's favourite pearls, and saying,—

"These are too incongruous for one in your position," proceeded to try the effect against her own hair.

"Oh, not those! not those!" cried the girl. "Anything but my pearls; I will appeal to my grandfather; he will not allow me to suffer such indignity and wrong."

"You can appeal to him if you please, but that will do no good. Here no one disputes my will, and you are foolish to oppose yourself to me. You forget what you are!"

The poor child's heart sank within her, her head drooped, and tears filled her eyes, but she made no further expostulation or entreaty;



only basied herself mechanically in restoring her belongings to order.

Such a new and terrible life began for her now that at times she feared the misery and degradation of it would drive her mad. She was penniless and alone in an evil house, and could not even send a line to her friends, being watched closely, and all her correspondence carefully overlooked.

All the morning she worked with Lydia, in the afternoon she read to her grandfather, and the evenings were spent in playing for Mrs. Byford's edification, or in repairing that lady's gaudy, but scanty wardrobe.

There was scarcely a minute of the day she could call her own; and when at last she crept up to her room, it was to find Lydia wide awake, and very curious as to her movements.

A great dread fell upon her lest she should die in this house, so lonely, so God-forsaken; and her natural timidity was so increased that she scarcely dared venture down the long corridors, or through the silent rooms alone.

No letters reached her from Eric or Guinevere, and Val suspected that some had been intercepted, and cried in her sick heart, "What must they, what can they believe of me? They think I am false and forgetful. Oh, Eric! oh, my friend! how sorely I need your help."

So a month crept wearily by, and then one day Mrs. Byford announced that Mr. Levi, "a rich cousin of mine," would dine with them, and added she had prevailed upon him to spend a few weeks with them.

"He is very rich," she remarked, boastfully, "and much respected in the city, and if he does not marry, Lydia will come into a great fortune when he dies. Miss Dalton, you must make my red velvet look as well as possible."

All the afternoon Val sat working at the shabby red velvet, which Mrs. Byford insisted should be trimmed lavishly with yellow Nottingham lace; and had the satisfaction of knowing that her own ornaments would adorn the other's head and throat. Then she went to her room to make a hasty and careless toilet.

Mr. Levi arrived in due time, and dinner being announced, Val slowly descended, and slipped into her place, hoping she had not been noticed.

But Mr. Levi's quick eyes turned instantly upon her.

"How do you do, Miss Dalton?" he asked, not waiting for an introduction. "Rebecca has been speaking of you, so that you don't seem like a stranger to me."

He spoke abruptly, but the voice was not unpleasant, the face not unfriendly, and Val answered as best she could; then he devoted himself to his dinner, and she was left undisturbed until the gentlemen joined them in the drawing-room.

Then Mrs. Byford bade her sing, and Mr. Levi, who was passionately fond of music, drew nearer, listening eagerly as the tremulous voice gradually grew firmer, rising and falling in mellow cadences.

When the song ended he said, "Thank you immensely, Miss Dalton; you sing well. I had no idea Rebecca harboured a nightingale."

"Do not spoil her by flattery," his cousin broke in; "she is capricious enough as it is."

"I never flatter Rebecca," he answered, coldly, and she subsided into silence, standing not a little in awe of Mr. Levi; and he begged for another song. He was so kind in speech and looks that Val was glad to serve him, even in so small a thing; and the evening wore away more pleasantly than usual.

Mr. Levi was a power in the house, and did not scruple frankly to condemn his cousin's management or miserly way; and although she hotly resented this she bore it in silence.

"Nathan is dreadful in a rage," she said to Val. "It takes a great deal to rouse him, but once roused, it is hard work to soothe him. I believe he never forgets or forgives an offence."

However that might be, he continued his kindly manner towards Val, whilst Mrs. By-

ford looked on angrily, afraid that "Nathan would make a fool of himself for that pale-faced chit."

He had begun by pitying the poor child; but day after day, watching her sweet selfishness, her meek submission to her most unhappy lot, pity deepened into something warmer and fonder. He had gone through forty years without experiencing a warmer sentiment for any woman than friendship, and as Rebecca would say, "When he took the plague it would be badly." Val was distinctly not his ideal, and yet he loved her, suddenly, violently, unreasonably.

One morning when they sat at breakfast, Mrs. Byford sorting her letters, he saw Val's eyes watching her wistfully, and finally she asked,—

"Is there not one for me?"

"No. Does anyone ever trouble to write to you?" and she was about to transfer one to her pocket when Mr. Levi put out his hand, and quietly wresting it from her, said calmly,—

"You are mistaken, Rebecca, this is for Miss Dalton. How many letters have you intercepted thus?"

She was furious, and his calmness irritated her the more. How dare he so wantonly insult her before that girl! Had she not a right to end a correspondence which would do more harm than good? And if she generously gave Miss Dalton shelter and food she considered she had a perfect right to act as she pleased with regard to her and her belongings.

The man's eyes flashed ominously, but he did not lose his calmness, as taking Rebecca by the hand, he led her to the door.

"It would be as well if you retired to your room for awhile," he said. "Do not degrade yourself further in my eyes," and without a word she went. He turned smilingly to Val.

"Really, I ought to have married Rebecca," he remarked. "I am the only person of whom she stands in awe. Is your letter what you expected?"

"I have not opened it yet, but it comes from a friend—my dearest friend."

"And you are anxious to master the contents? Pray, don't mind me, I have my paper," and using it as a screen he left her free to read Eric's words.

"MY DEAR LITTLE VAL—Until now I have not ventured to write you a single line, knowing that I have wronged you deeply, although Heaven sees, unintentionally; but when my mother's and Guinevere's appeals remain unnoticed I must pluck up courage to send you a few lines. Dear, we are all most anxious concerning you, and the house is wretched without you. Won't you come back to us and make us happy? Or is my sin so great you cannot forgive? Tell me frankly, dear little Val, I deserve that you should be angry, but you must not include my mother in that anger."

"Are they kind to you in your new home? Are you happy? You leave us a prey to so many doubts by your silence. I am afraid for you, little woman; and remembering my promise to your dead father, cannot think myself absolved from all duty towards you, despite our altered relations. Unless you write, and quickly, I shall come to you, and bring you back to the home which is no home without you. My mother bids me convey her dearest love to you, and I, myself, would have you remember how dear you must always be to your brother."

And when she had read all these kind words, the tears which had slowly risen to her eyes rained down her cheeks. She rested her arms upon the table, and burying her face upon them, sobbed for very thankfulness.

Startled and dismayed, Mr. Levi moved to her side.

"You are unhappy? Your friends have written unkindly?"

"No, oh, no!" she answered, lifting streaming eyes to his. "They are so good, so much

more fond than I deserve or hoped. It is their kindness smites me so. My heart aches with its burden of gratitude and love."

She was trembling very much, and he laid one hand protectingly upon her shoulder.

"Try to be calm," he said, gently. "Any violent emotion is bad for you now; you are so frail and nervous. Val, won't you tell me what I can do for you? Do you suppose I am blind to your sufferings, or the indignities you hourly endure? Is this the first letter you have received since you came to this wretched house?"

She bowed an affirmative; then said, "I wrote twice; but received no reply, and I am quite sure my letters never left this house."

"Write again, and I will post the letter myself. You can trust me, little Val?"

"Yes, oh, yes!" gratefully. Then she flushed all over face and throat. "I—I have no money—not even so much as will buy paper and stamps."

Nathan Levi's face darkened. "This shall be altered; poor little child—poor little soul! Val, you must let me be your banker. I shall not charge an exorbitant interest," laughing. "Although we Jews have such a bad name some of us have hearts like other men. Why do you hesitate to accept so small a gift—or loan?"

"Because I can never repay you. Mrs. Byford has appropriated all my ornaments but this," showing her ring, "and with this I could not part."

He smiled somewhat sadly.

"Write your letter, and I will take it to the post at once; but you must have money. Do not refuse, you hurt me more than you can tell!" and he thrust a handful of gold upon her. "Will you be finished in half-an-hour?"

"Yes, oh yes; and thank you for all your goodness!" With a humility which wounded him she lifted his hand and kissed it, in sign of gratitude and thanks. He snatched it hastily away, and hurried from the room, whilst poor little Val wondered in what way she had offended him.

Her letter soon was written. She merely said that circumstances had prevented her replying before; that she was always truly grateful for all the love and care lavished upon her; that she hoped soon to hear Eric's wedding solemnised, and then—not until then—would she return to the home she had so loved. They need feel no anxiety concerning her, she was well, and as happy as she could be away from them.

## CHAPTER VI.

IN the afternoon Nathan Levi drove Val into the neighbouring town, where he insisted upon purchasing such articles of finery and comfort as he thought she needed. It was vain to remonstrate with him, he only laughed and said,—

"My age gives me privileges. I have so much to be grateful for!"

"But I have no claim upon you!"

"You have the claim every weak, friendless creature has upon every man. Perhaps in my case it is greater than you imagine," with a sudden, passionate glance at the small, pale face.

The girl was not looking at him. She was sublimely unconscious of his love, and all the burden of doubts and fears he was enduring. She was not vain enough to suppose there was anything to admire in her, that any man could desire her for his own. Once, perhaps, she might have hoped this; but Eric had taken from her whatever little vanity she ever possessed.

The drive was pleasant, though cold, and Val enjoyed the new sights like a very child; but on their return journey, great masses of black clouds gathered rapidly, and presently the rain fell in torrents.

Mr. Levi looked anxiously at his companion.

"What shall I do for you?" he asked, distressfully. It is useless going back, because we

are just about half-way home; but you will get horribly wet, you poor child!"

"I shall do very well," she answered, shivering involuntarily, "and I will change my clothes for others when I get home. Please not to trouble about me!"

But he was troubled more than he cared to show. She was so little and so weak, who could tell what this exposure meant for her? His heart ached as his eyes rested on her pale face, and he almost cursed himself for bringing her so far from home.

Mrs. Byford came to the hall door to meet them. "You are wet, Nathan?" she said, carefully ignoring the dripping little figure before her.

"It is nothing," he answered, impatiently. "Miss Dalton is the sufferer, not I. Go to your room at once, and when you have put on dry things come to me."

Val was glad enough to obey, being miserably cold, and Mr. Levi turned into the common sitting-room where a bright fire was burning.

"Have you any spirits in the house, Rebecca?" he asked.

"No," she answered sullenly, "but there is some elder wine."

"Bring it me; I shall call some for Miss Dalton. I am very much afraid she has already taken cold."

Without a word his cousin brought him all he required, and watched his operations with angry eyes. Presently she could keep silent no longer, and broke out,—

"Nathan, are you going to make a fool of yourself for that girl? Do you forget the stain upon her name?"

He turned sharply upon her.

"Your first question I refuse to answer; your second must have been asked in a moment of forgetfulness. Your name was once a subject for much evil-gossip. Let Miss Dalton be; her mother's sin should not shadow her whole life."

She was silent, afraid of him; the look in his eyes awoke her as nothing else could, and with a gesture of contempt he turned from her to his self-appointed task. Presently Val appeared paler than usual, with tired eyes and an air of lassitude. Levi wheeled the shabby easy chair towards the fire, and compelling her to seat herself, brought her the mald wine, and bade her drink.

"You are very good to me," she said gratefully. "I do not know how to thank you."

"No thanks are necessary," he answered smilingly. "It is time some one looked after you, you poor child."

Mrs. Byford sniffed contemptuously, and left the room in high dudgeon. Nathan drew his chair nearer to the girl, and sat down beside her.

"You look ill, and really ought to have kept your room."

"No, no; it is so wretched up there, and so cold; I would rather come down. But I am afraid I have got a violent chill; my limbs ache, and my head feels heavy."

"And there is no one here to look after you, Valentine—I may call you by your name?—what were your friends about to let you come to such a place as this?"

"They could not guess how bad it would be, and I have never told them. Then there were reasons—real reasons why I should leave them—great reasons why I should not return unless literally compelled to do so. You will forgive me that I cannot explain."

"Keep your own secrets, Val. I am very sure they are pure and innocent ones."

She looked gratefully at him, wondering in her humility that he should be so kind to one so unfortunate as herself; and Nathan Levi went on,—

"I have spoken to your grandfather about the position you occupy here, and have tried to arouse some anxiety as to your health in his mind, but he is so completely under Rebecca's control that my efforts were useless."

"And he has no affection for me," Val said,

sadly. "He has not forgiven my poor dead mother; although, indeed, he it was who sold her to misery and sin. Every time he looks at me a scorned expression comes into his eyes. He is frightened by my likeness to her, but he has not penitence or remorseful."

"Poor child! The life here is too hard and torrid for you. Your happiness lies in escape from it, and there is even now a way open to you, but I fear you will not take it."

"Try me," eagerly. "I will do anything you advise—if you will only show me the way to live honestly. I am so stupid, and not very well educated, I am afraid."

The strong man trembled as he possessed himself of one little frail hand.

"You are speaking rashly, Val. Oh! Val, don't you see?" and when she looked into his eyes she read his meaning there, and shrank back, frightened and distressed by the sudden revelation of his love.

"Oh no! no!" she cried, "not that, Mr. Levi; please not that," and sought to hide her face from him; but he now held both hands prisoners, and kneeling before her that he might bring his face on a level with hers, pleaded,—

"Listen to me, Val, listen! Have patience with me because of my love. It is wild and foolish perhaps, to speak of it, but I can keep silence no longer. Your wrongs and woes break down the feeble barriers I had placed between you and myself. I know I am not the sort of man to win a young girl's fancy, and that my race is regarded with dislike and scorn. Yet I venture to plead with you—because I love you."

"Oh! hush!" she entreated, in great agitation. "You do me too much honour; but—but it hurts me to think you care for me so much. Oh! what shall I say to you?"

"Say only you will not send me hopelessly away. As my wife you should be shielded from every adverse wind that blows, loved and revered beyond all words to tell. I would not seem to bribe you, dearest, but there is nothing you could crave that should not be yours. There are few things that I would not do to win you."

Some girls might have been tempted by the glitter of his wealth, some been touched to consent by his devotion, or glad to escape from so wretched a lot by marriage; but none of these considerations weighed with little Val. Her head drooped and tears filled her eyes, but her voice was almost steady when she said,—

"Indeed, indeed, I love you very much (but, oh! not as you wish). I am very grateful for all your goodness, but what you ask can never be. It is hard to tell you, but I owe you so much. I gave my heart long ago, wholly and for ever."

"Did he die?" Nathan asked, in a low, strained voice, "or was he unfaithful to you?"

"Neither of these things; but I found he loved a lady so beautiful, so good, that she, and she alone, was worthy of him. And I learned, too, he would have married me out of pity for my loneliness and shame; and then—and then I came away."

He held her hands faster in his own; his breath came hard and deep.—

"Val," he pleaded, "can't you forget? Not just now, but in a little while, when the ache has grown less?"

"I shall never forget," she answered, simply. "My love will only die with me."

He sighed deeply; it was hard that love should come to him so late, and be in vain.

"My dearest!" he urged, "my dearest, let us forget your words. Give me the right to protect and care for you, and I will be content simply to have and hold you mine. Do not send me away. Remember you are all in all to me, and be kind."

(To be concluded in our next.)

A "good man gone wrong," is usually a bad man found out.

## FACETIÆ.

"Are you a guest of this house?" asked the clerk at the cigar-stand of a travelling man. "A what?" "A guest." "Oh, no; not at all. I am simply permitted to live here—tolerated at the rate of a pound per day."

"I say, Bromley," said Dumbley, "do you believe there is such a person in existence as the foot-killer?" "Let me see, Dumbley," replied Bromley. "About how old are you?" "I'm gettin' on toward fifty." "No," replied Bromley, "I don't believe there is."

MISS ROMANCE (at the theatre): "Note the precision with which that handsome actor steps across the stage. Every stride is exactly the same length." Mr. Bohemian (a little jealous): "Yes, that habit of measuring the steps comes from walking on railway sleepers."

MRS. A SOCIAL CALL.—Lady of the House: "Now you can go along. I have nothing to give you." Tramp: "Don't get excited, miss, I was presented with a turkey at the last house, and, having found the wash-bone, I have called, thinking you might like to break it with me."

MAMA (to Edie, aged three and one-half years, just home from her first morning at the kindergarten): "Well, Edie, how did you like it?" Edie: "I didn't like it a bit. The teacher put me on a chair, and told me to sit there for the present. And I sat and sat, and she never gave me the present."

"We must depend on the public," remarked a travelling man, in the course of a conversation. "Can you tell me one thing?" asked his companion. "What is it?" "Who is the public?" "Why, that's easy enough. The public is everybody except yourself and the people who employ you."

"How did you spend the last summer?" asked one travelling man of another whom he had not seen for some time. "Oh, I had a fine time! Never enjoyed myself more in my life." "What did you do?" "I was camping out among the northern lakes. What did you do?" "I did considerable camping out myself." "Whereabouts?" "On the front door step. My wife wouldn't let me in."

Mrs. D. PRINCE: "Oh! tell me! I shall go distracted." Mr. D. PRINCE (springing to her side): "Merciful heavens! What has happened?" "The washerwoman has made a mistake, and sent me one of Mrs. Westend's lace handkerchiefs." "Well, what of it?" "What of it?" "What of it?" "O you—you—Why, Mrs. Westend must have received my miserably cheap imitation lace handkerchief, and it has my name on it."

TAKEN AT HIS WORD.—Cromwell was thinking of marrying his daughter Frances to a wealthy gentleman of Gloucestershire, when he was led to believe that one of his own chaplains, Mr. Jeremy White, a young man of pleasing manners, was secretly paying his addresses to Lady Frances, who was far from discouraging his attentions. Entering his daughter's room one day, the protector caught White on his knees, kissing the lady's hand.

"What is the meaning of this?" Cromwell demanded. "May I please your highness," replied White, with great presence of mind, pointing to one of the lady's maids who happened to be in the room, "I have long courted that young gentlewoman and cannot prevail; I was, therefore, praying her ladyship to intercede for me."

"Why do you refuse the honour Mr. White would do you?" said Cromwell to the young woman. "He is my friend, and I expect you should treat him as such." "If Mr. White intends me that honour," answered the woman, with a very low courtesy, "I shall not be against him." "Sayest thou so, my lass?" said Cromwell. "Call Goodwin—this business shall be done before I go out of the room." Goodwin, the chaplain, arrived, and White was married on the spot to the young woman.



## SOCIETY.

THE Prince of Wales, accompanied by his eldest son, Albert Victor, held the first Levee of the season, on behalf of the Queen, at St. James's Palace. There were only 240 presentations, which cannot be considered a large number. The whole affair was exceedingly dull and uninteresting, but the band gave a little relief to the proceedings, otherwise it might have been imagined that a funeral procession was going on. The West-end was full of cabs and carriages, containing batches of officers in full uniform, who were driving as if their lives depended on it, in the direction of St. James's Palace.

THE Princess of Wales has lately been out several times driving round the Park. She was well wrapped up in furs, no indeed was necessary; but she had the sense not to disfigure her face with one of those horrid "demon" veils which have a hideous pattern of frogs, toads, and devils sprawling over it, into the intervals of which the colours of the human face fit with the most ludicrous effect. She looked very well and youthful, and not the least bit raw and frosty, as most ladies do now when driving.

It is becoming a matter of common observation how very wonderfully like the Princess of Wales the Princess Victoria of Teck is growing, and this is the more remarkable, because the two elder Wales girls are really not very like their mother, and have inherited rather the heavy features of our own Royal people.

THE Duke of Portland's betrothed, Miss Dallas Yorke, is a descendant of an old family, the Dallases of Cantray, which trace their lineage back to Sir William de Doleys. In 1617 there was a William Dallas of Cantray who was a life-renter of Cantray. He married Agnes Rose, of Kilravock, and on her death, Janet Campbell, a daughter of the Thane of Cawdor. His eldest son, Alexander, by his first wife, succeeded him in the Cantray property, and his second son, George, founded the family of Dallas of St. Martin's, Rosshire, which became a flourishing branch of the family tree. It is of this St. Martin's branch that Mr. Thomas Dallas Yorke, of Walmgate, Lincoln, father of the Duke's fiancée, is the chief representative, and the young lady who marries the Duke of Portland is his only daughter. Her father added the surname of Yorke on succeeding to the property of his maternal uncle in 1856.

WITH respect to the new Duchess of Sutherland *Modern Society* is responsible for the following facts: Some seventeen odd years ago, Mrs. Blair, the present Duchess of Sutherland, who stands six feet in her silk stockings, was then Miss Mary Mitchell, younger daughter of Doctor Mitchell, public orator, and later on Principal of Hertford College, who was one of the most popular personalities to be met with in Oxford Society, and that is saying a great deal. Little did Miss Mary Mitchell in those days imagine that she would ever reach up to the dual strawberry leaves, and that she would be called upon to preside over the glories of Stafford House, Trentham, and Dunrobin, as the wife of the premier Earl of Scotland. Yet the turning of the wheel of fortune has brought this most extraordinary and incomprehensible change about; and Miss Mary Mitchell, of Oxford, has been united to George Granville, third Duke of Sutherland.

AFTER all the preliminary fuss which had been made over the Ice Carnival, the reality was a great disappointment. The bazaar itself was confined to the floor of the Albert Hall, and the "huge" scenes of which so much was said were not particularly tall, so that the visitor who entered from Kensington Gore, instead of being "immensely impressed by the striking scene which met his eye," was very much amused to see that he could look right over the "antique castellated gateway."

## STATISTICS.

THE life-boats round our coasts during the past year rescued no fewer than six hundred and seventeen persons, the great majority of whom but for the efforts of the gallant crews would have perished.

THE following figures show the devastations caused in the Hungarian vineyards by the *Phylloxera*:—In 1881, 50 vineyards were infected; this number rose in 1882 to 79, in 1883 to 107, in 1884 to 337, in 1885 to 888, in 1886 to 582, and in 1887 to 811. In 1887, 132 352 acres of land were infected, the area of all the Hungarian vineyards together being 740,000 acres.

DR. NORMAN KNER, believing the statement of temperance people to be extravagant that sixty thousand people died annually from the effects of strong drink, began as early as 1870 a personal inquiry, in connection with several medical men and experts, expecting to quickly disprove the same. According to their deductions, the latest estimates of deaths of adults annually caused through intemperance is in Great Britain one hundred and twenty thousand; in France, one hundred and forty-two thousand; in the United States, eighty thousand,—or nearly half a million each year in three countries aggregating a population of one hundred and twelve million.

## GEMS.

IGNORANCE is the night of the mind, but a night without moon or stars.

THE man who sits down and waits to be appreciated will find himself among uncalled-for luggage after the limited express has gone by.

THE one prudence in life is concentration; the one evil is dissipation; and it makes no difference whether our dissipations are coarse or fine.

WHATEVER you may be sure of, be sure at least of this, that you are very like other people. Human nature has a much greater genius for sameness than for originality.

It makes a vast difference with ourselves, as well as with our impressions of the world whether we are thankful for the roses we find on thorns or complain about the thorns we find among roses.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

APPLE CREAM CAKE.—One egg and yolk of another, one cup sugar, and tablespoonful butter, one-half cup milk, one teaspoonful of cream tartar, and one-half soda, two cups of flour. Bake in three tins.

CELERY.—Scrape clean and cut the stalks into inch pieces, cook in boiling salted water till tender. Drain and mix with a white sauce. Celery is usually eaten raw as a salad, but is more digestible when cooked, and is particularly adapted to nervous or rheumatic people.

CHOCOLATE CAKE.—One-half cup of butter, two cups sugar, one and one-half pints of flour, five eggs, beaten separately, the whites to a stiff froth, two teaspoonfuls baking powder, and one cup of milk. Rub butter and sugar to a light cream, add the egg yolks, sift the flour with the powder, and add to the butter, etc. and the milk. Mix into a rather thin batter, and bake in jelly cake tin well greased, in hot oven, fifteen or twenty minutes. For filling between layers: One pint of milk, one tablespoonful butter, one cup sugar, one-half cup grated chocolate, two teaspoonfuls corn starch, yolks of three eggs, one teaspoonful extract vanilla; boil milk, stir in chocolate, sugar and corn flour; boil five minutes. Take from the fire, add egg yolks, stirring rapidly; add butter and then vanilla when cool.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

IN the centre of the Champs de Mars, at the forthcoming Paris Exhibition, there is to be a terrestrial globe about thirteen metres in diameter. It will be a representation of the world on a scale of one-millionth—that is to say, a million times smaller than the actual world. To give some idea of the proportion, the city of Paris will barely cover a square centimetre. The globe will turn on its axis like an ordinary school globe and is certain to form an interesting feature of the Exhibition.

HUE AND CRY was the old common-law process in England of pursuing "with horn and with voice," from hundred to hundred, and county to county, all robbers and felons. Formerly the hundred was bound to make good all loss occasioned by the robberies therein committed, unless the felon were taken; but by subsequent laws it is made answerable only for damage committed by riotous assemblies. The pursuit of a felon was aided by a description of him in the *Hue and Cry*, a gazette established for advertising felons in 1710.

PURE air is to the lungs the most important tonic, and we should see to it that we have sufficient of it in the rooms in which we live and work. Not only must the air space be sufficient, but that air must be constantly renewed if we are to live healthy lives. Nor can the importance of open-air exercise be exaggerated. We should accustom ourselves and our children to be out in all weathers and at all temperatures, unless there be some special reason to the contrary. Keep the skin healthy with regular cold bathing, and always wear wool next to it.

WITH THE FINGERS.—The list of things that can be eaten from the fingers is on the increase. It includes all bread, toast, tarts and small cakes, celery and asparagus, when served whole, as it should be, either hot or cold; lettuce, which must be crumbled in the fingers and dipped in salt or sauce; olives, to which a fork should never be put any more than a knife should be put to raw oysters; strawberries, when served with stems on, as they should be, are touched to pulverized sugar; cheese in all forms, except *Brie* or *Roquefort* or *Cumbert*, and fruit of all kinds except preserves and melons. The latter should be eaten with a spoon or fork. In the use of fingers greater indulgence is being shown, and you cannot, if you are well-bred, make any very bad mistake in this direction, especially when the finger bowl stands by you and the napkin is handy.

INFLUENCE OF MARRIAGE.—Habit and long life together are more necessary to happiness and even to love, than is generally imagined. No one is happy with the object of his attachment, until he has passed days, and above all, many days of misfortune with her. The married pair must know each other to the centre of their souls—the mysterious veil which covered the two spouses in the primitive church, must be raised in its inmost folds, how closely sever is may be kept drawn to the rest of the world. What on account of a fit of caprice or burst of passion, am I to be exposed to the fears of losing my wife and my children, and to renounce the hope of passing my declining days with them? Let no one imagine that fear will make me become a better husband. No; we do not attach ourselves to a possession which we are in danger of losing—the soul of a man, as well as his body, is incomplete without his wife; he has strength, the has tenacity; he combats the enemy and labours in the field, but he understands nothing of domestic life; his companion is waiting to prepare his repast and sweeten his existence. Without woman man would be rude, gross, solitary. Woman spreads around him the flowers of existence. Finally, the Christian pair live and die united; in the dust they lie side by side; and they are united beyond the tomb.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**ROSIE.**—The specimen is fair, but masculine in style.  
**PUSSY** had better leave nature alone; the washes, dyes and beautifiers usually sold are all injurious.

**M. H. G.**—Keep the corns trimmed, soak the feet in hot water occasionally for some little time, and wear large boots.

**BALLY.**—Brush your hair frequently, and have it cut and washed regularly. You write a fair, but rather childish hand.

**FRANCES W.** had better leave arsenic alone. It is a deadly poison, and should never be taken except under proper medical advice.

**M. ROSE.**—1. The money and the value of the furniture would be divided equally between the children. 2. The 29th September, 1882, fell on a Monday.

**MAY.**—Polite reticence on the subject was better than anything you could have said. But you should, of course, not expose yourself to such treatment again.

**F. D.**—Keep quiet until the girl gets over her angry feelings sufficiently to give you a chance to talk the matter over with her. Then it will probably all come right.

**NELLY.**—Probably if you like to write to the postmaster of the town named, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope, he might oblige you. We regret we cannot supply the information.

**NORA H.**—There is no special meaning attached to them. It simply implies that the glands in that particular portion do not give out the usual colouring matter. It is not at all uncommon.

**C. N.**—You had better defer marriage until you are twenty-one years of age, and have more experience and wisdom. You are no match for a widow of twenty-five. Your parents should attend to your case.

**ROSA J.**—The iron crown of Lombardy is known to be more than 1,000 years old, and no crown of precious metal and rarest gems has ever been sought so earnestly by sovereigns. It has been worn by Charlemagne, Barbarossa, and Napoleon the Great. Its last possessor was the Emperor of Austria, who, when he resigned the title of King of Lombardy-Venetia, gave the precious relic to the late Victor Emmanuel.

**W. J. W.**—By no means reply to the advertisements offering ladies remunerative employment at their own homes, or you may indeed prove a victim. From the tone of your letter and handwriting you seem to have been well educated, and, far better, to have a proper feeling. Can you not obtain the employment you seek from one of the houses in your own town or its vicinity? Steadfastly make the attempt, have patience, and, believe us, you will not fail.

**M. M.**—You are right; it is necessary to reduce the compound fractions in order to find the least common denominator, to which all the fractions can be reduced, and which in this case is 900. It is not necessary, however, to reduce the mixed numbers to improper fractions, in order to find the least common denominator, but before reducing the fractions to this least common denominator, it is usually convenient to reduce such mixed numbers as a preliminary step.

**S. N.**—Most precious stones are characterised by their hardness. The diamond is the hardest substance known, and the varieties of corundum, such as rubies, sapphires, emeralds, and oriental amethysts, come next. The common amethyst is only coloured quartz, and although too hard to be scratched with a knife, yields to the file, with some difficulty. If you find any pebble which will scratch the smooth surface of a six-sided pyramid of rock crystal, you may be pretty sure that you have a precious stone, but its money value depends on its clearness and brilliancy. A "rough" diamond has little to distinguish it to the eye from a small quartz pebble.

**A. H.**—The contents of the Old Testament were determined by the Jewish Rabbis thousands of years ago, and in the main their arrangement of its various books is still followed. The books of the New Testament were selected by the learned Fathers of the Christian Church, after vast and prolonged study of the subject. The Bible, as it stands to-day, is believed by the chief authorities in Christendom to contain all the inspired books given to man under the Jewish and the Christian Dispensations. Some small sects, and also some individual critics, dissent from this generally accepted opinion, but their dissent has but little, if any, influence on the main current of religious belief.

**M. D. M.**—It is only a popular designation given for convenience, to the distinct but associated gases which proceed from foul places. The most malodorous of these gases is sulphuretted hydrogen. Fortunately it is heavier than common air, and does not rise to do the deadly work, though its offensive smell impregnates the air for a long distance. Carbonic acid gas is another component of the so-called sewer gas. This is as fatal to life as sulphuretted hydrogen, but, like the latter, remains for the most part at the bottom of the sewer, cesspool, or stagnant well. The papers often give accounts of the death of workmen who are actually drowned by sinking unawares into a deposit or pool of this ponderous gas. It is some lighter gas, like ammonia or hydrogen, that emanates freely from bad places. Such a gas brings up with it the germs of typhoid fever, diphtheria, and some other virulent diseases—these death-seeds being, in an unknown manner, yielded by the decomposing substances that abound in such places.

**J. B. S.**—Wash your hands frequently in a tolerably strong solution of borax and water.

**R. I. F.**—1. Golden brown hair—a fitting crown to a face that is doubtless beautiful. 2. Fine penmanship.

**S. S. W.**—To remove proud flesh, pulverise loaf sugar very fine, and apply it to the part affected. Good writing.

**ETTIE.**—It is a very common thing for cousins to marry. There is no law against it. Her Majesty married a cousin.

**L. S.**—A slight bow is all that courtesy requires after an introduction. Hand-shaking is optional, and it should rest with the older, or the superior in social standing, to make the advances.

**W. K.**—1. A teaspoonful of powdered charcoal in half a glass of water will sometimes correct a bad breath. Repeat the dose, if necessary. 2. Charcoal powder mixed with prepared chalk will help to clean and whiten the teeth.

**A. A. J.**—If the young lady you refer to were engaged she would not probably allow you to pay her such marked attention—at least she should not. Avail yourself of the first opportunity to make your sentiments towards her known.

**D. D.**—The growth and strength of the hair depends greatly upon the healthfulness of the individual, and consequently no preparation can be counted upon as sure. Washing it with a mixture of bay-rum and alum will, it is said, improve its growth.

**F. F.**—1. The average height of the English mastiff is from 25 to 31 inches; weight, from 100 to 150 pounds. The German boarhound, which is also known as the Great Dane and Ulmer dog, is the original cross from which sprang the so-called prison bloodhound of this country. They are from 24 to 31 inches high, and weigh from 80 to 100 pounds. 2. The coat is not described plainly enough to admit of a recognition.

## DISAPPOINTED.

For every moment's joy  
 There is an hour of pain.  
 The soul, from glimpses of paradise,  
 Comes back to earth again.

But yesterday there came to me  
 A ray of love's own light;  
 To-day 'tis gone, and shadows fall  
 Just where the way was bright.

But yesterday the heavens opened  
 And let their brightness down;  
 Upon my heart, to-day, I stand  
 'Neath heaven's darkening frown.

One glimpse of sunshine—vanished, fled,  
 Leaving the day more drear,  
 Because I know the joy I craved  
 Had come so very near.

So, back from paradise, my soul  
 Falls, on her weary wing;  
 And, disappointed, waits on earth,  
 Whatever the hours may bring.

A. L. P.

**L. L. N.**—Possession of land for twenty years, by a person claiming full title, gives such person the absolute ownership, provided that another person, entitled to claim, has not been during part of that time a minor, or otherwise legally disabled from asserting his right. If, however, our correspondent refers, as we infer he does, to the length of time necessary to give the public an indefeasible right to land covered by a highway, much less time is required if the owner, by acquiescence in its use as a highway, makes a dedication of it for such a purpose. Even six years has been held sufficient.

**W. C. W.**—To remove pitting and old pockmarks, simple oil, pomade, or ointment, medicated with croton oil, and of a strength just sufficient to raise a very slight pustular eruption, is probably the safest, most effective, and convenient of all preparations employed for the purpose. It has been successfully used in France, and has received the approval of the medical fraternity of that country. It should be applied at intervals extending over several weeks, as the feelings and convenience of the party treated may indicate, due care being taken in its application. It would be better before applying the mixture to consult a physician as to the advisability of the step.

**G. S. S.**—The following is the recipe for which you make inquiry: A chemist is the proper person to compound it. Sulphate of iron, five grains; magnesia, ten grains; peppermint-water, eleven drachms; spirit of nutmeg, one drachm. To be taken twice a day. This preparation acts as a stimulant and tonic, and thus partially supplies the place of habitual drinking, while also preventing that absolute physical prostration following a sudden breaking off from the use of stimulating drinks. As a matter of course, the virtue of this preparation requires the taker to make a resolution to break off from his habitual intemperance, and then aids him, as a harmless and pleasant makeshift, during his season of weakness and suffering from the want of the customary stimulant. It should be borne in mind that a confirmed drunkard cannot be cured of his disease in spite of and unknown to himself. He must make up his mind to stop short in his downward career, and with the help of the above preparation will be very likely to conquer the appetite for strong drink.

**L. L.**—A person of such an age as twenty-one has no cause for being dissatisfied with life, unless weighed down by some great sorrow, as the loss of parents or other dear relatives. We think that should you state your trouble to a physician he would pronounce it to be caused by a disordered liver, and prescribe accordingly. It may be a severe attack of love-sickness, in which event we would recommend marriage at as early a date as possible.

**C. J. W.**—The roaches may be caught at night by filling a porcelain bowl or wash-basin two-thirds full of sweetened water, setting it on the floor, and laying sticks of laths up to the edge. It is a regular trap. The insects go up the sticks, go down into the water, and cannot get out. All found in the bowl must be absolutely killed (burned or crushed) in the morning, and the trap set again at night. In this way and with no further remedy the whole stock of these pests may be annihilated.

**JOE.**—Terra (r Tierra) del Fuego means the "land of fire." It is so named on account of the numerous volcanic mountains found within its limits. This archipelago, situated at the extreme south of South America, from the mainland of which it is separated by Magellan's Straits, consists of eleven large islands (the principal one being called King Charles's South Land) and about twenty islets. It was discovered by Magellan in 1520, who gave it the name it still bears. Some writers call it the "land of desolation"—a most appropriate title.

**V. D.**—1. Do not allow your mind to dwell upon the fact that your plainness is the cause of remark among certain people, who, we are inclined to believe, are jealous of your sunny temperament and genial manner. These are greater and more lasting possessions than a pretty face, and serve as a magnet to attract sensible people to you. In fact, they will always serve as a shield upon which the barbs of jealousy are quickly broken. 2. The general appearance of your communication is very creditable, more especially as to penmanship. 3. Light brown.

**L. L.**—Follow these directions, and a fine batch of scrapple will be the result: Take eight pounds of scraps of pork, that will not do for sausage, boil in four gallons of water; when tender, chop fine, strain the liquor, and pour back into the pot. Then put in the meat, season it with sage, summer savory, salt and pepper to taste, and stir in a quart of meal. After simmering a few minutes, make very thick by the addition of flour. It requires but very little boiling after this, but must be stirred constantly. Pour into deep pans or dishes, and allow it to cool.

**M. E. E.**—It is impossible for any one to be "positively sure" as to the result of any course of medical treatment. Persons who have been addicted to the excessive use of opium for years have been greatly helped by some of the physicians who have given that subject special study. The cure is moral, as well as medical. The patient's will has to be strengthened so that he can resist the appetite; and if his will power cannot be restored, then his case is usually hopeless. What the result would be in your case can only be ascertained by actual experiment; and we most sincerely hope that it will be as favourable as you could wish.

**E. F. N.**—1. For silver weddings a light blue paper is used with letterings and designs in silver, somewhat elaborately executed; but for golden ones, gold ornaments, much plainer. 2. A very appropriate design consists of branches, the Linden signifying constancy. 3. There is no change in the style of invitation for afternoon teas, and those for archery, yachting, and lawn-tennis are treated symbolically in the character of their designs as formerly. 4. For children's gatherings, a small note sheet, headed by a coloured design which signifies the character of the party, such as a Christmas tree, a May-pole, or some well-known personages from "Mother Goose," bears the invitation.

**A. L. E.**—The electrical apparatus used to give "shocks" is usually a frictional machine, not a battery, while that used for medical purposes is frequently a little magnetic machine, which is really a small dynamo. The simplest frictional machine consists of a large, circular glass plate, turning on a horizontal axis, supported by two wooden uprights. On each side of the plate, on the uprights which support the axis, are cushions pressing against the plate as it is turned, and so producing the friction which generates the electricity. In front of the plate are two metallic conductors, supported on glass legs, to receive the charge. It would be necessary to give you drawings to enable you to construct such a machine, and we refer you to Everett's translation of Descane's "Natural Philosophy" for further information.

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